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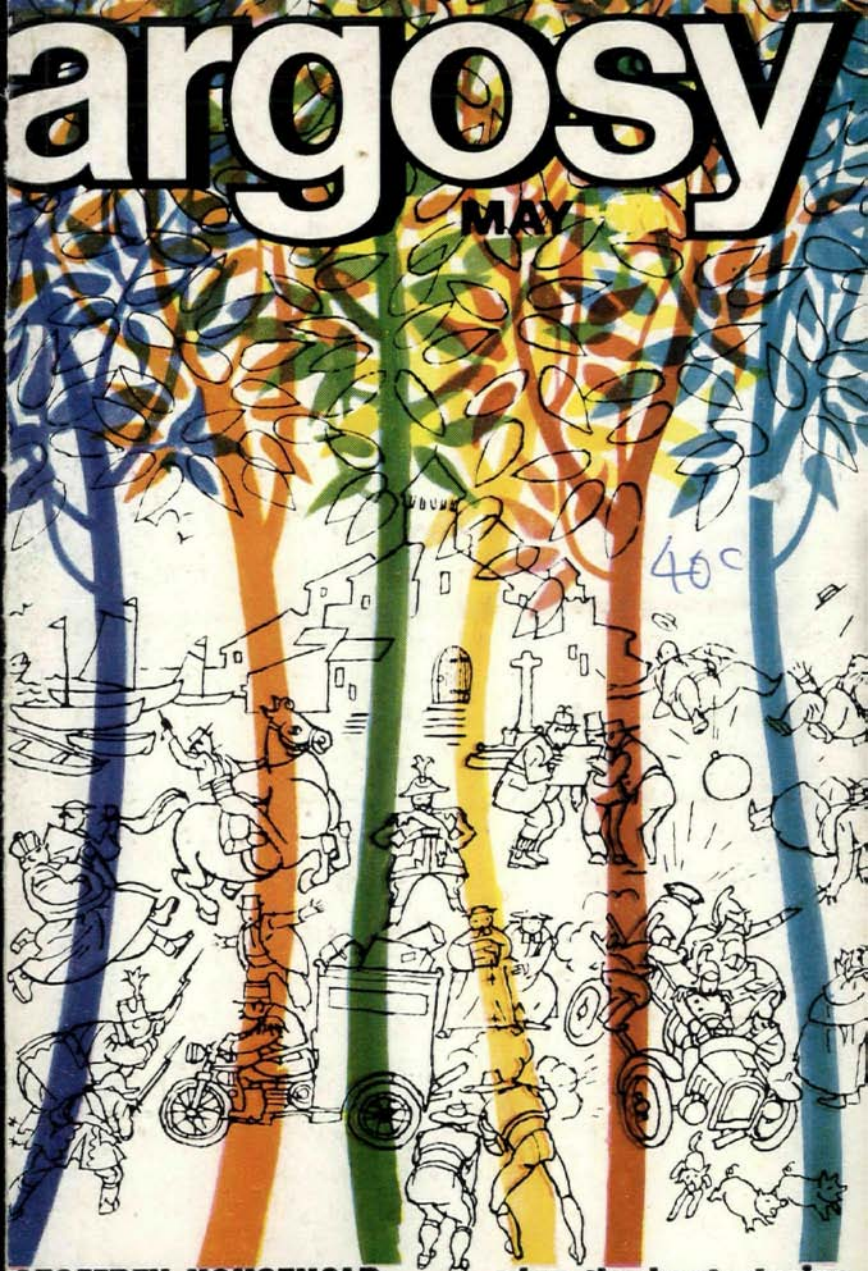

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Summer

MY position as junior dishwasher in the Whitestone House Hotel was the most menial in the entire establishment and my pay—it was barely subsistence. Everybody was my superior—from Les, the senior dishwasher, up the social ladder of kitchen porters, still-room assistants, breakfast chefs, waiters, right up to Max, the chief chef, and George, the head waiter, and even beyond them to Brigadier and Mrs. Moult who owned the Whitestone House.

There were the guests, too, one hundred and forty-nine of them, wealthy, elderly people who on good days sat in military formation across the front of the English lawn, staring defiantly at the sea below, or on wet days gathered in the lounges and did *The Times* crossword as a community exercise—or so the waiters told us; but they were so superior a civilisation that they did not come into my reckoning at all. My only contact with them was their soiled dishes which I collected at the service hatch, scraped clean into the refuse bins, and carried across the kitchen to Les at the dishwashing machine.

Les called me Pat because I was Irish, an accident that puzzled and astonished him when he remembered it.

"You really from Ireland, Pat?"

"Yes, Les."

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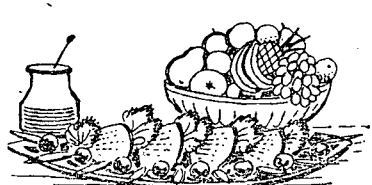
in Devonshire

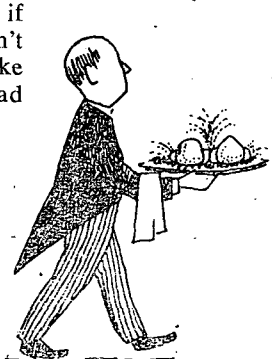
by BRIAN FRIEL

"Coo!! Wot d'you know about that! Ireland! Coo!" He was a small, dehydrated Cockney in his sixties who worked as a stoker in a private hospital in London during the winter, and dishwashed during the summer when the central heating in the hospital was off. I never learned if he was married or single, nor what he did in his free time, nor how he came to be in South Devon that summer.

The only information he volunteered was about the Sterling Private Hospital: "If you ever get sick, Pat, go to the Sterling. The best 'ospital in England. Coo, you should feel the heat of that place when I get that boiler really 'opping!" and about the radio he had saved up for over the previous four years and had finally bought: "Some radio, Pat. Moscow, Paris, New York, even the ruddy seagulls flying over the Atlantic! Coo!" His eyes were light blue and while he worked they went glazed as if they were remembering something long, long ago in the past.

George, the head waiter, had been a valet to Lord Hedgeson before coming to the Whitehouse. I asked him why he had left that comfortable job to come to Devonshire, and he whispered confidentially, "He was a good man, laddy, but vulgar. Just too vulgar for words, if you know what I mean. I really couldn't endure him any longer." He looked like a jockey, bandy legs and all, who had





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given up the weight battle. He was suave, politic, completely bald, never spoke above a whisper, and spent a lot of his time placating Max, the chef.

Max was a surly mountain of a man of Central European origin and he hated everyone. He had worked for a time in Chicago where he picked up a minimum of English and a taste for pornographic paperbacks, and had settled in England because, "they so poor here they gotta make a rabbit eat good even after four days, and this is challenge to Max."

He and George shared a room which they decorated jointly: Max's half was covered with nude pin-ups, George's with pictures of the stately homes of England, carefully cut out of colour magazines left behind by guests. George always addressed the chef as "Max, dear boy," and Max addressed the head waiter as "Tarzan," at which George smiled thinly and almost never winced. Max called me "Dishvaasher," and George called me "Laddy." I was then seventeen and anxious to please.

My first job in the grey and red dawn was to clear up the supper trays of the previous night. Then, breakfasts had begun; and then morning coffee, and then lunch, and then afternoon tea and dinner; and by the time the dinner dishes were washed, I was scarcely able to crawl into my basement bed. Les, being the senior operative, never moved from the washing-up machine. I had to scrape the soiled dishes, pile them, leave them at Les' left hand, cross behind him, dry the washed dishes, and then dash back to the hatch for a further supply. The hatch was in the wall that separated our kitchen from the hot-plate room where the meals were doled out to the sweating waiters. And because I was constantly running from the hatch to the machine I was exposed to the abuse of the chefs and waiters and of Les.

"Come on, Pat! Speed it up! Don't they 'ave no 'otels in Ireland?"

"Yes, Les."

"They do? Coo! In Ireland, too. Wot d'you know about that!"

"Dishvaasher!"

"Coming, Max."

"Hatch is clog up again, Dishvaasher! You sleeping?"

"No, Max."

"How can top chef work in kip-house like this!"

George was ubiquitous. When life was almost unbearable, he appeared at my elbow, consoling with his deferential voice.

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"Everything's going fine, Laddy. Not to worry."

"George, I'm going as fast as I—"

"The roses are in full bloom, and the gardener assures me we won't be disappointed in the petunias. Everything's fine, Laddy, just fine."

"Were you really *born* in Ireland, Pat?"

"I was, Les."

"And tell me, do they 'ave 'ospitals in Ireland—you know, real 'ospitals?"

"Yes. Yes."

"Coo! Real 'ospitals in Ireland! Well, wot d'you know about that!"

"Dishvaasher! Dishvaasher! Dishvaasher!"

Apart from Mrs. Moult who occasionally swept through the working quarters and blessed us with her sweet vicarage smile, and the Brigadier, who paid us grudgingly on Friday afternoon, the only person from the outside world we ever saw in our steaming purgatory was Roy Pressing, a villager who every day after lunch took away the refuse for his pigs. The two bins were placed below the hatch, and I helped Roy carry them out to the back of the hotel. There we tipped the swill into the rear of his van.

Roy had the appearance and manner of a stall-keeper at a funfair. When he swaggered into the kitchen he brought with him the ease and freshness and happiness of the summer outside.

"Hello! Hello! Hello! And how are all my slaves today, eh? Keep at it, my little moles! Too many cooks spoil the broth, ha! How goes it, George? Yes, Les, keep the flag flying. And Maxie, old cock, still overfeeding them? You have a lot to answer for, feeding up those old codgers and shortening their lives, ha!"

I liked Roy, perhaps because he was the only person who used my proper Christian name, or maybe because he slipped me the odd half-crown at the back of the hotel. But Max hated him. If he were in a particularly sour humour he would bellow at him, "Go back to your pigs, Bressing! Stay in your pig-style!" at which Roy would laugh and call back, "They sent their love to you, Maxie, old cock. They call you their Uncle Maxie, ha!"

George told me once that Roy was an up-and-coming man. "He has a beautiful big farm house and a pretty wife. Mark my words, Laddy, some day Roy Pressing will be a man to

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be reckoned with in this village." It was obvious from his awed tone that he considered Roy was heading straight for stately-home status.

"Do they 'ave farms in Ireland, Pat?"

"It's an agricultural country, Les."

"But do they 'ave pigs and cows and things like that?"

"Yes."

"In Ireland, too! Real farms! And 'ens wot lay eggs and all?"

"Real hens, Les."

"Coo! Wot d'you know about that!"

As the season rushed towards its peak, Les' astonishment grew, and Max's temper shortened, and George's diplomacy almost, but never quite, deserted him. The work got harder, and the kitchen hotter, and on the first Friday in July Brigadier Moult lined us up, inspected us, and announced that from then on all furlough was cancelled. I was already too exhausted to care.

At lunch-time on the following Thursday, George sidled up to me and asked me to come to his room that night at ten-thirty, "to discuss a little matter of business." When I turned up, Max, clad as scantily as the pin-ups above him, was stretched on his bed, reading a garish paperback. He went on reading and ignored me.

George looked tired but he summoned his best dining-room manner, slid a chair under me, offered me cigarettes, whisky, after-dinner mints (he had a key to the stock room at the back of the bar), and then, after appealing and futile looks at Max in the hope of involving him, finally came to the point.

"Max and I are considering going into a business partnership, Laddy, and we think—we feel—that you should be included in our plan."

"'The Phantom closed the door and turned the key in the lock,'" the chef read aloud. "'He turned to the panting figure of Laura and walked slowly towards her.'"

"What I mean to say, Laddy, is that you would be of great assistance to us and that we would, of course, recompense you according—according—according to your co-operation."

"'With one blow that ripped her gown from her shoulder he flung her down on the studio couch. Her eyes watched him in fascinated horror.'"

"Max, dear boy! Please!"

"What is wrong, Tarzan?"

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"I'm trying to talk to the boy, if you don't mind."

"Talk. Talk. Talk."

George began to pace the floor, glancing up at his magazine murals now and again as if for support.

"To get to the point, Laddy; we are going into partnership with Roy Pressing, and he is prepared to pay the three of us handsomely if we can agree among ourselves and if he can rely on our complete secrecy."

"'She stopped quivering and lay still. The Phantom undid his cloak.'"

I asked what the deal was, and George, in the most delicate of euphemisms and while Laura and the Phantom besported themselves on the couch, explained it to me.

Roy's pigs, it appeared, had been smitten with swine fever and were dying off like flies. He was facing financial ruin, and his pretty wife was worried sick: Then, in the depths of his anxiety he had a brain-wave: he would open his beautiful big farmhouse to boarders for the summer season. But all his capital would be needed for equipping the bedrooms and dining room, and the wholesale grocers in Exeter were unwilling to give him credit, and he wondered would there be any chance of doing a deal with the staff of the Whitestone House?

What he had in mind, he explained to George, was that he would continue collecting the refuse, just for the sake of appearances, but perhaps Max and George in the generosity of their hearts would give him not only the scraps and left-overs but any good food that could be served again on Roy's tables—ends of roasts, remains of chickens, and the like. The refuse could be dumped into one bin, the good food into another. He would collect the bins twice a day instead of once. And he would gladly donate a weekly sum to the staff of the Whitestone, to be divided among them as they saw fit.

George retailed the plan to Max, and Max agreed that it was possible—for a consideration, of course; he was, after all, a top chef, and Roy's guests weren't going to enjoy his culinary artistry for nothing. George brought this news back to Roy, and Roy was so relieved that he said, "Name the consideration, and it's yours, old cock," just like that, because nothing worried him more than to see his pretty wife worried. So, a consideration was agreed on, and the partnership sealed with handshakes, and all that had to be done now was to get my co-operation—for a consideration, of course.

"What has this got to do with me?" I asked.

"You're overworked as it is, Laddy, and now you'll be

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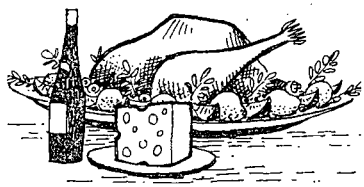

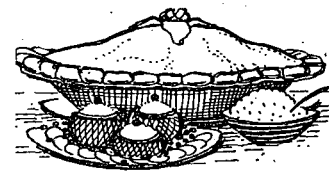

asked to help Roy twice a day instead of once, if you're agreeable; and for this extra duty you'll get a pound a week."

"Where is this extra food to come from?"

For the first time Max looked up from his book.

"You say yes or you say no, Dishvaasher—which is it?"

"Now, now, Max, dear boy! Temper, temper! Where is this extra food to come from—an excellent question. I'll tell you the answer, Laddy. Our good friend, Max, is in charge of ordering supplies, as you already know, and from tomorrow on he will order foodstuffs for twenty extra guests. That extra food will be cooked as only Max can cook it and deposited in the bin for Roy to collect. And everyone will be happy, Laddy—Roy, his pretty wife, Max, me, you, and Roy's lucky guests."

"And what will Moult say?"

George winced briefly. "Well, you see, Laddy, at this point in the summer season—"

"He object and I walk out," said Max. "He say a word and he lose top chef at height of season."

"In a manner of speaking that is the position," said George quickly. "He may notice the increase in orders, but it would be very difficult for him to check up with any accuracy, what with the number of casuals we have and that. No, I don't expect any trouble from the Brigadier. He's too fine a gentleman to pry too deeply. You couldn't have a nicer couple to work for."

"He do not pry Max," said Max.

"What do you say, Laddy? You'll agree to doing a little extra duty to pull Roy out of a tight hole?"

I said all right, why not, and George's bald pate suddenly glowed with relief, and he raised his eyes to Balmoral Castle and said in a voice that was resonant with gratitude and humility, "Everything in the garden is lovely, just lovely."

The following morning Roy Pressing replaced one of the battered bins with a new one lined in white enamel, and that

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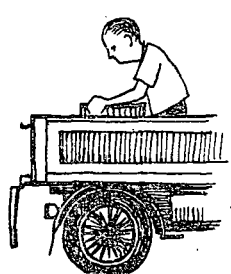
afternoon and again after dinner he and I staggered out with the two bins to his van at the back of the hotel. We did this twice a day from then on. The deal was never once mentioned. Roy behaved with the same honest breeziness, and Max responded with his usual surliness, and George always managed to be at hand to hold the kitchen door open for us, bow graciously, and murmur some platitude as we passed, as if we were favoured guests. Every Saturday night I found a pound note under my pillow.

The filling of the bins went without a hitch. As usual I scraped the plates into the battered one, but now, when I would go to the hatch, I would find a full haunch of roast venison or a brace of steamed partridges or braised pheasants or a grilled salmon, and these I would toss into the enamel container as carelessly as if they were potato peelings. I emptied salvers of *gâteau quatre-feuilles*, apple pudding, *riz à la crème*; dishes of scrambled-egg savouries, savoury pancakes, and iced Camembert; casseroles of *œufs au spaghetti, œufs Cipollata, œufs Mornay;* whole duck, snipe, chicken, hare, quails, turkeys; lobsters and river eels; ribs of beef and cutlets of lamb; pork fillets and mutton stew; stuffed tomatoes, French beans, and mashed potatoes; dishes I never smelled or saw before in my life; and at least three times a week I disposed of an entire Gruyère or an Italian Bel Paese. Occasionally I would hesitate before a fifteen-pound side of succulent beef, ready for carving. But Max's huge scowling face would appear in the hatch, and the blast of his, "Dishvaasher!" delivered within inches of my ear, would send the food slithering into the good bin. Within a month my conscience stopped troubling me. I thought as little of throwing out a dozen teal, cooked in white Austrian wine, as my mother thought of throwing out a pot of nettle soup that her turkeys had tired of. July and August passed, and on the first Friday of September Brigadier Moult lined us up, paid us, and addressed us.

"Since you met the summer onslaught like men, stood your ground, and never wavered, we are restoring twenty-four-hour furlough forthwith —one day per week per enlisted man. Back to the job!"



George worked out a rota system

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and pinned it on the still-room door. Within an hour the steam had made his cautious handwriting illegible.

"When is your day off?" I asked Les.

He looked up from the machine, stared hard at me, and looked down again. "What part of Ireland are you from, Pat?" His voice was quiet.

I told him.

"Did you ever 'ear of a place called Creeslough?"

I said it was in County Donegal, in the north-west.

"Ever been there, Pat?"

I told him I hadn't.

"Wot sort of a place d'you think it would be?"

I said I imagined it was a typical small Irish town—one main street, a dozen or so shops, a church, a school.

"As far as I know it's on the sea," I added.

His eyes quickened at this. "On the sea? Creeslough? Coo! Are you sure, Pat?"

"I think so."

"With boats and seagulls and things?"

"I suppose so, Les."

"Well, wot d'you know about that! Creeslough on the sea! Coo! She never told me that. Never."

"Who never told you, Les?"

"She told me there was a dance 'all with green and yellow and blue lights, but she never mentioned no sea."

"Who are you talking about? Was this a girl of yours?"

He looked up at me again, a hard, quick, appraising look, and snapped, "Back to the job! You expect me to stand 'ere all day, waiting for you to fetch stuff from that 'atch? Get a move on!"

That was the last time he asked me about Ireland.

George allocated the very next day, Saturday, to himself and Max. They took a sleep-in and sauntered into the kitchen around noon, demanding fruit juice and coffee in absurdly posh accents. They were as giddy as schoolboys on the last day of term.

"May I have some ma'malade, waiter?" George called above the rumble of the dishwashing machine. "And give my compliments to the chef on this truly wonderful meal and ask him what he'll have to drink."

For the first time I saw Max happy. He watched George as if he were an older brother, and the more George clowned, the louder he laughed, until his bloated body shook and tears were streaming down his huge cheeks.

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"Stop him, Dishvaasher!" he called to me. "Stop him! Stop him! He going to burst me!"

They looked so strange in civilian clothes that I began to laugh, too—little George in an immaculate white shirt and flannels, and big Max in a purple sports shirt and jeans that fitted him like skin.

"Shall we have a round of golf, dear boy, or shall we go for a jolly old walk, shall we?"

"Stop him! I burst open! I do!"

"A walk it is. Toodle-oo, chaps. If we're not back before dinner, you'll know we've eloped with Mrs. Moult. Be good." And with a wave of his fingertips and a flutter of eyelashes he skipped off, followed by the helpless Max.

"Wot's that they said about Mrs. Moult?" said Les suspiciously.

"They were joking," I said.

"Said they would elope with 'er! Some joking, that! That's nothing to joke about!" His face was greyer than usual. As the weeks had passed the steam from the machine had left his white hair lank and drained his face of the little colour it had.

"When do you go back to the Sterling, Les?" I asked briskly.

"Wot's that?"

"The Sterling Hospital—are you going back to it as soon as we wind up here?"

"I don't know," he replied listlessly. "Maybe. I don't know. Put those dried dishes away, Pat, will you?"

A half-hour later, he collapsed with a perforated ulcer and was taken away by ambulance to Exeter. Before they drove him away, I put all his worldly goods—his radio and an armful of old clothes—at the foot of his stretcher. I mumbled some feeble joke about not being able to operate the machine because we had no dishwashing machines in Ireland. But he was unconscious. I never saw him again.

I had all the lunch things to do by myself and I had not finished with them when the afternoon teas began. I was beginning them when Mrs. Moult swept in and gave me her sweetest smile.

"I can't manage by myself, Mrs. Moult," I blurted out.

"What's the trouble?" she asked.

"It's just—just that I can't do all these dishes alone. Not with Les gone." I was on the point of tears.

She tilted up her chin, and her eyes were full of compassion.

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"Of course you can," she said softly. "You're an excellent boy. Of course you can." And she patted me on the head, made a kissing sound with her lips, and passed through to the dining room.

I cried then, spread across the long deal table, until I had exhausted myself. I cried myself to sleep.

George wakened me. When I opened my eyes, his startled face was pressed into mine, and his hands gripped and shook my shoulders.

"Max—where's Max?—have you seen Max?" he kept asking. I began to tell him about Les.

"To hell with Les, Laddy! It's Max I'm worried about. We've got to find Max, or we're both in trouble."

"Trouble?"

"O my God, this is a sorry day, Laddy! The game's up! Roy Pressing told us a pack of lies. Everything in the garden's ruined, just ruined!"

"What has happened, George?"

"We've got to find Max! We've got to stop him!"

His desperate eyes went beyond me and into the hot-plate room in the hope that by some chance Max might be standing there.

"I was in the water, see, swimming about like a duke, when he wades out to me, in his clothes and everything, and his face all flat and dead with anger. 'He fool Max,' he says. 'He fool Max about guests. And now Max kill.' 'What are you talking about, Max, dear boy?' I says just like that there, you know, all reasonable. And he says, 'Bressing lie. I kill.' And without another word he wades out to the sand and heads away up the beach. And by the time I came out of the water and got my clothes on, he was gone—vanished."

"What did Pressing do?"

"That's where I went to first thing, up to his place. He lied to us, Laddy. And when he spoke to me he just laughed, thought it was all a great joke. He told me himself out of his own mouth: 'Never kept boarders in my puff, old cock. The wife wouldn't touch them. Pigs are more in my line; got a pretty modern plant for them out in the back there. Want to see round it?'"

"But all the good food—" I began.

"Went to the pigs. He has over four hundred now. Fed on the fat of the land. Max and us sweating it out here day after day—for pigs!"

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"And how did Max find out?"

"Pressing's wife told him. He met her in the post office. She thought it was a scream, too. O my God, Laddy, we'd better get the chef before he destroys us all! Come on and help me to look for him. Maybe we should tell the police. Laddy, this is a terrible crisis in our lives!" He dashed towards the door. "Leave those dishes and help me to find him," he called back. "O my God, everything in the garden is wrecked, completely wrecked!"

When the sound of his footsteps had died away, I decided instantly that the sooner I got away from Whitestone House Hotel and South Devon the better. I waited until a humming waiter had left an afternoon tea tray in the hatch. Then I went down to my bedroom, packed my belongings, and crept out of the building. A quarter of an hour later I got a bus at the depot and two hours later, when the dinner gong would be ringing, I was booking in for the night at the Salvation Army Hostel in Plymouth. The following morning I caught a train to Liverpool and a boat to Ireland that night.

Before I boarded the train I bought a local paper. No murder was splashed across the headlines. No manslaughter case was quoted in any of the news pages. But at the bottom right-hand corner of the sports page I found an item which had puzzled the reporter who had recorded it:

> A strange incident occurred in the village of Whitestone late yesterday afternoon. The piggery of Mr. Roy Pressing was broken into, and three pigs were killed and a dozen others seriously injured by knife wounds. Hearing the squealing, Mr. Pressing went out to investigate and got a glimpse of the attacker as he scaled the back wall of the enclosed yard. Mr. Pressing never saw the man before and was unable to furnish the police with a description, nor has he any idea why such a cowardly crime was perpetrated. Police are continuing with their investigations.

During the journey home and for many years afterwards I thought off and on of George and Max and wondered what became of them. But I thought more often of Les, and I determined that if I was ever to set foot in England again I would look him up. Ten years later I did return to England, and in a bar in the Cromwell Road one night I fell in with a pretty young nurse. I asked her did she know of the Sterling Private Hospital. She did not. Somehow I never got round to making any further inquiries.

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She had another vision of them all lined up like animals in a cage, watching her every move

A Very Strange Lady

by ANTHONY MASTERS

WHATEVER happens—you *must* talk." Edward's words sounded as monotonously as the tennis ball that thudded from one side of the court to the other. The heat was intense and the grass was turning rusty brown. As she lay in her deckchair she could see the beads of perspiration on Edward's forehead and she noticed that there were damp patches on his shirt. She didn't play—and everyone else did. It was a great drawback—particularly to Edward. She curled up her toes inside her tight court shoes and risked closing her eyes for a moment. The trodden-grass smell filled her nostrils and somewhere an insect was giving off a high-pitched buzz. Anyway, she thought guiltily, they'll never see me and there's no-one to talk to at the moment.

She was alone, outside the netting, nearly asleep. Inside, on the court, two furious games of doubles were being sweated out, the moisture running into their eyes and spoiling their returns. The sun blazed down from a spotless blue sky, bleaching their whites until they shimmered like mirages, and reddening their grey city faces and white limbs.

Major Boyce-Carter and his wife Gwendoline against Phillip Highbury and his wife Lydia. Derek Manderville and his wife Sally against Edward and a girl called Tessa who was the daughter of the owner of the country club in whose grounds they were playing. She was the right sort of girl, Derek had told Edward, and naturally she would only join them for tennis. He was very sorry that Joy didn't play tennis, but what with the young children and the house, Derek was quite sure that she would appreciate some relaxation.

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Edward agreed, overstated the fact that she was so tired, and pointed out that, because of the children, she had never had time to learn to play. Derek had smiled, nodded and, later, agreed with his wife that Edward seemed to have married a dull stick. "Not a word to say for herself, so terribly droopy and she doesn't play—"

Sally, who was forty, well-painted and tough, shook her auburn-tinted head and lit a cigarette. "Edward needs help—he's so damned young to be Phillip's partner—he wants some backing up. I wonder if she plays bridge?" Sally thought, Silly little bitch! God, it took some pushing to get Derek's directorship. Doesn't she know what she's got to do?

The insect began a curious kind of drone and Joy opened her eyes to find a big bluebottle circling her head. She dabbed at it lethargically but it continued to flicker around her. With sudden irritation she got up stiffly and walked over to the netting where she was greeted by an energetic wave from Major Boyce-Carter. She noticed that his shorts were very long and his legs were very thin. She turned a giggle into a yawn, which was even worse, for Edward caught her eye from the next court and frowned.

"All right for some!" bellowed the Major, furiously smashing a first service into the net. Gwendoline pushed aside a lock of frizzy hair and smiled at her, before turning on her husband.

"Come *on*, partner!"

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They were nice, Joy thought, old and rather silly. She was glad that she had not known them when they were younger; perhaps they would have been like Phillip or Derek. The trouble is, Joy pondered, as she idly plucked at the ragged netting, that they are all so much older than us . . .

She had felt quite sick when Edward had come home to supper that night and told her all about the tennis party. She had been bathing Nicholas, her hair limp and tangled, and she had a boil in her nose. It was very painful and the doctor had told she was run down. Whilst Nicholas splashed water in her eyes, and Edward talked about the Social Side of His Career—he always spoke in capitals when he was in a good mood—Timothy was making strange gobbling noises in the kitchen. Picking a struggling Nicholas out of the bath, she wrapped him in a towel and made a dash for the other room where Timothy was trying to push a small wooden engine into his mouth.

Edward followed, still capitalising, and poured himself some sherry. As Timothy began to scream, Nicholas looked at him with respect, opened his round, cherubic mouth and joined in. Dimly she was aware, amidst the tumult, of Edward's voice going on and on.

"Be quiet, Timothy. Now look here, Joy—why the hell are you so damned apathetic? Like it or not, this do's important. You know it's important. Why don't you pull yourself together and think things out logically for a change? The old man will be there, and you already know Derek and Phillip. You'll find the women are charming and no-one will mind you sitting the tennis out. Shut up, Nicholas! Look, we've discussed this Partnership business time and time again. I've told you all about this side of it before . . ."

And he had—repeatedly. Years ago it had all been a great joke. There had been the book titles they'd invented together and laughed so hard about: *Steps to a Junior Partnership* by Gwendoline Boyce-Carter; *My Life and Money* by Edward Johnson; *An Articled Clerk's Guide to Country Clubs: Easy Lessons to Entertaining Senior Partners' Wives* by Joy Johnson and so on. But now it was different—it all seemed in such deadly earnest—and as dinner party followed dinner party Joy felt their original light-hearted approach changing into a back-breaking climb into artifice that she was unable to cope with.

The women were a good fifteen years older than her and

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she seemed to make no headway with them at all. Conversation deserted her and she dithered inanities about babies, clothes and domesticity until the glazed boredom on their faces and the contrived tone of their voices made her dry up completely and the dinner party fell in ruins around her. Edward, of course, was furious.

She wandered away from the netting and began to walk down a path which led to the lake that shone golden through a copse. Behind her the lawns of the club were hard and dry with great patches of dead grass and the gravel beneath her feet was hot and difficult to negotiate. She could feel Edward's eyes on her but dared not turn round to confirm it. An indignant cry from the court made her suppose that he had missed a shot in his irritation with her. She could imagine what he would say to her in the car on the way home:

"Now let's get one thing straight—if you ever do that to me again I'll—I'll damn well leave you. I've never been so humiliated. I mean, what the hell must the old man have thought? At least you could stay and look interested instead of bloody-well wandering off like a lost sheep!"

He would be right too—she should stay and watch—applaud them or something—except she could never work out how you scored. She smiled—the dim little wife—quite domestic and wrapped up in the children. Quite suddenly the thought of Nicholas and Timothy brought tears to her eyes and she began to walk quickly, to fight them back. Sentimental pictures flashed up before her eyes: bath-time, bedtime, stories—she almost ran, regardless of the extraordinary impression she was giving. The thud of a ball into the net reassured her that they were not, in fact, standing gaping at her from behind their netting. She had another picture of them all lined up like animals in a cage, watching her every move as she ran towards the copse. Slowly they all changed into bison with big, stupid eyes and she wanted to laugh aloud—but it changed into a sob.

Timothy always climbed into bed with her in the morning and directly he did this, Nicholas would begin to cry from his cot and he had to be brought in too. She fiercely stopped herself—if she cried it would wreck her make-up and reduce the day to more of a shambles than it already was. Besides, there was the evening to get through yet—drinks and then dinner in the club. Somehow she would have to recharge herself for this. She looked at her watch. Four o'clock.

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They would play for another hour at least. If she walked down to the lake and back, she would then go and watch the last half-hour of the game. Perhaps she would be able to regain control down by the lake.

It was delightfully cool in the copse and there was moss and dark patches of clay beneath her feet. She noticed that she had laddered a stocking and self-pity swept over her and then vanished as she came out by the water. It was marvellous—there was no-one there and only a few ripples disturbed the surface. The lake was bounded by trees, poplars and elms, whose leaves moved slightly in a breath of wind. The water was quite shallow and there was a muddy beach at one end. At the other was a ramshackle boathouse and in the deeper water, half-hidden by some reeds, was a dinghy. A sudden impulse made her walk towards it and she saw that there was a shaky-looking jetty to which it was moored. Without any deliberation Joy stepped on to the jetty, slipped the rope off the mooring-post, and pushed off through the reeds. Gingerly, she gently manipulated the oars through the foliage and the spiky stems touched her face as she glided through. Then she was outside them and on the lake, rowing gently towards the centre. Timothy would have liked it—he loved boats—so did Edward and she remembered a hilarious lunch-hour they had spent on the Serpentine, Edward in his city suit and bowler hat, his umbrella lying in the bottom of the boat. As they were going back he had suddenly opened his umbrella, holding it aloft whilst he sat solemnly underneath it. Oh, they had laughed then—and Edward had shouted out something about "if only the old man could see me now!" They had giggled all the way across the park and swung Timothy between them. They had walked to Edward's office with him and as he kissed her goodbye and went in, she had noticed a great wet patch on his behind. Joy had laughed all the way home in the Tube and everyone had stared at her and she hadn't even noticed.

Then—she lost the oar. She had paused in the centre of the lake. There was a small, thickly-wooded island and on the slopes there were hundreds of ducks scrabbling about. She wished she had some bread. It was then that the oar slipped out of its rowlock and gently floated about three yards out of reach on the glassy surface. Lazily, she leaned over the side but the dinghy, unbalanced, turned a gradual arc, taking her well out of reach. With rising panic she desperately patted at the water with the other oar, but she misjudged the

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manœuvre and the boat did another arc—farther away than ever from her objective. Desperately and ineffectually Joy turned the boat in increasing circles and after five minutes she was a good fifteen yards away from the oar and drifting out into the lake again. Then, quite gently, the dinghy slowed down and drifted in the centre of about a hundred yards of almost motionless water.

Joy, after a further hour of frustrating and useless paddling, sat numbed and almost amused at her predicament. The consequence of it all was frightening enough to be ridiculous, and she lit a cigarette with a steady hand and sat back to await developments. Surely someone would come soon. A heron rose above the water and darted at the surface. It emerged with nothing. Two swans glided past her—a slow wake coursing behind them that left dying ripples for yards over the lake. They passed quite close to her, and she watched them as they drifted out of sight around the island. She looked at her watch and saw it was five-thirty. Panic surged through her and her sense of humour completely disappeared.

Desperately she stabbed at the water with her one oar but it was no use. She shivered—more through fear than cold. What on earth would they all think—and what would Edward say? Her sense of humour came back for a fleeting moment as she imagined him speechless with fury. Then she remembered the partnership and shuddered.

An hour later they all appeared on the edge of the lake. The old man first, panting a little, followed by Gwendoline, clad in a fantastic towel-like dressing gown. Then Phillip and Lydia, both still in shorts, and Derek and Sally appeared. For a moment she wondered if she should throw herself full-length into the bottom of the boat; anything to avoid them seeing her. But it looked as if they already had, for they were grouped now with Sally pointing in her direction. They stared at her and she stared back. Then the old man waved and shouted something that she couldn't catch. Joy waved hesitatingly but they weren't looking at her now—they were looking back towards the copse. Edward appeared and walked down to join them. They seemed to be explaining the situation to him and suddenly Sally drew apart from the group and walked along the beach. It was apparent even to Joy in the centre of the lake, that Sally was laughing.

She sipped a martini and talked to the old man. He was

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very jovial and as the drink warmed her Joy found conversation a little easier. It had been awful when Edward had come across the lake in the motor-boat, but she was grateful that he hadn't brought the others. He didn't say much and she asked him how the tennis had gone. Edward replied monosyllabically and they were silent for the rest of the trip.

As they drew near the jetty she had said brightly, "I must say, I'm most awfully hungry. I've got a huge appetite for dinner."

Edward had said nothing but had helped her stiffly from the motor-boat on to the jetty. The others had tactfully walked back towards the club, leaving Joy and Edward to walk silently through the copse.

"It was so lovely and cool in here this afternoon," Joy had prattled. "And look at this moss—isn't it a lovely bright green?"

But Edward had taken her arm and they had walked swiftly on.

"We'd better hurry—I said we'd meet the others in the bar at seven."

She had managed to avoid the other women in the Ladies but when she had come into the bar with the still-silent Edward they were all there with their drinks, their hard, artificial conversation and their husbands who stood rock-like among them.

Swiftly, Joy separated herself from Edward and plunged fiercely into conversation with the old man. They talked about tennis, about the club and the countryside around it, about gardening and about the rising cost of living. They did not discuss Edward although Joy felt that they should. The old man brought more drinks and they became detached from the main group. With her fourth martini she was becoming more expansive and at least was managing to hold her own. In fact she was dominating the conversation, and in the back of her mind she remembered that lunch had consisted of a boiled egg. Her cheeks flushed as she prattled on, speaking faster and faster until the old man was hardly saying anything. Full of the success of her new-found sociability Joy decided to turn the conversation subtly on to Edward as every career-man's wife should.

"Of course, you know, what with two children and a mortgaged house, not even including the fact the car's always going wrong, we do find it a struggle. Of course, Edward's done so well recently it has made a difference to us. Oh

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yes, quite a considerable difference. But as you know yourself there's always education looming its ugly head. I mean Timothy's five, you see, and naturally we've had him on the list for Lancing since he was a baby. But the fees, Major, the fees. It's fantastic the way they've soared every term. Of course with grown-up sons of your own you've been through all this yourself, but then in those days—well I mean—" Joy floundered a little but steered herself back on course fairly effectively. "You see—with Edward's present salary we can just about cope but—"

It was then that Joy realised she was embarrassing the old man. He was going pucer and pucer in the face and suddenly her unguarded clumsiness came home to her. She broke off in mid-sentence, floundered again and slowly crimsoned. Conversation deserted her and she stared helplessly at him. They faced each other, speechless, until Joy stuttered, "I—really—I do hope you don't—I mean it was—just a general remark of course—I had no intention . . ." and the old man said, "My dear young lady—naturally I was—of course there's no question . . ."

Somehow they overcame it, but the subsequent conversation was utterly flat and the old man extricated himself with a muttered excuse and disappeared—presumably in the direction of the lavatory.

Unsteadily, Joy walked over to Edward, who was deep in conversation with Derek, Phillip and Gwendoline. They seemed surprised to see her, and Edward stepped forward as if he was about to introduce a stranger.

"Ah!" he said, with a vague wave of his hand.

"Hello," said Joy to everyone at large and staggered again slightly.

Edward immediately steadied her and squeezed her arm till it hurt, at the same time returning to his conversation a little too swiftly.

More drinks were brought and Joy stayed on the outside of the group, uninvolved in the conversation. Dimly she realised that she was becoming very tipsy.

"Wasn't it cool in that copse this afternoon, darling?" she said to Edward. It broke into the discussion and hung awkwardly in the air, and she realised that she had spoken thickly and clumsily to the whole group rather than discreetly as she had meant to Edward. She swayed again and Edward steadied her, once again putting the same pressure on her arm.

"You're hurting me, darling," she said, and noticed that

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Derek was unsuccessfully trying not to grin, Phillip was crimson and Gwendoline was raising her eyebrows.

They all had wine with the meal, and Joy settled back, feeling the rough Bordeaux induce a numbing drowsiness. She looked at her watch. Eleven-thirty. She wondered if Nicholas had behaved and whether Gerda had remembered to read Chapter V of *Wind in the Willows* to Timothy before he went to bed. That's where they had got up to but she couldn't remember if she had told Gerda. Perhaps she had—and yet she had no clear memory. Edward was standing by her saying something and she looked up puzzled.

"Yes, darling?"

Edward's voice sounded the same way as it had on the phone when he had failed his examination, a small-boy voice, frightened, anxious, yet petulant. "I *said*, would you like to dance?"

She suddenly noticed the band, a strip of dance floor and the absence of the others around the table.

"I'd love to." She rose and sank down again, the room spinning before her. With Edward's help she rose again and felt a little better. Her head cleared and she clung on to him as they walked the few paces to the floor. It was very crowded and the band was playing a bouncy tune. Joy bounced to it and so did Edward. Then came a waltz, a cha cha cha and a jive—she was enjoying every moment of it. Once or twice Edward suggested they sat down, but she said, "No, no—I'm loving every moment of it, darling. Don't let's sit down, it's so stuffy. We're young—and—and happy and it's a lovely, lovely evening. I'm sorry about the boat, but everybody's forgotten about it and they all like me. I only made one little mistake with the old man but I know he doesn't mind. You see, I'm very inexperienced at this kind of thing, but I am trying, and I'm getting much better really—really and I'm going to be a good business wife—and what's more I enjoy it—it's such fun . . ."

She looked at Edward's face. He looked very tired and frightened. She squeezed his hand. "Never mind, dear. You relax—I'll manage them all. Don't worry, I'll look after you."

They went on dancing and then, when the band disappeared, Joy and Edward sat down.

Joy turned to Lydia who was talking to Sally and said, "Excuse me, I'm so sorry to interrupt, but I'm just thinking how marvellous it would be if you all came to dinner next

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week—next Saturday if you can. I've got a new dish, lobster mornay," Joy hiccoughed slightly, "and I'd love to try it on you. You see, I only cook for people I really like, and we all get on so well together, don't we?"

There was complete silence whilst Joy looked eagerly round. Sally was the first to break it. "Well, Joy, I'd love to, but the trouble is that Derek and I already have another date—and aren't you and Phil going to the Brodericks' next Saturday?" Sally turned to Lydia who confirmed with a series of quick nods.

The old man was just about to speak when Joy broke into quick, rather thick speech again.

"Oh dear—what a shame. But what about the Saturday after that—surely you could come then?"

But the room was doing its strange spinning action again and everything seemed to come rushing towards her. She put her head on the table for a moment and felt a little better. Unfortunately as she raised it again a rush of nausea overcame her and she turned to Edward and said, "I'm so sorry, darling. I'm not feeling at all well. Would you mind taking me home?" Everyone immediately rose to their feet making sympathetic noises, but Edward said very firmly, "Please everyone stay—carry on and finish your evening. I'll take Joy home now. I'm so sorry—no, please don't get up or come out . . ." His voice trailed away but it still had an authoritative note in it. Meekly they did as they were told and amidst a chorus of "goodnights" and "give us a ring first thing tomorrow," Edward and Joy got their coats and walked out over the terrace towards the car park.

Major Boyce-Carter blew his nose violently and broke the uncomfortable silence at the table by saying, "What a very strange lady she is—I do hope she recovers quickly. Perhaps the night air would be—er—"

"She'd had too much to drink," said Lydia, but Phillip frowned at her and they all began to order liqueurs.

Outside on the terrace the night was warm and scented with the smell of trodden grass.

"I feel so much better out here," said Joy. "It's so cool. But what a lovely evening—you know, I was dreading it but it turned out to be such fun. I must say I'm looking forward to that dinner party—they're nice people, aren't they? Very nice people. What's the matter, darling? What on earth is the matter?"

Edward was crying.

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The sun scalded my hand. 'I'll give you ten seconds,' said Joe

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BY D'ARCY NILAND

Day of the Hot Wind

"OUT Winnininnie way," said the man with the two front teeth missing. He said it civilly enough. Maybe he smelled cop about us, I don't know. The other man, though, said nothing, the dark-faced one. He just looked on like a surly dog.

"And where are you heading now?"

He jabbed a thumb sideways. "Going home."

"Where's home?"

They glanced at each other, and the dark-faced man looked angry. His face was so dark his eyes seemed to be alight. "What's it to you blokes?" he snarled. "What's all the questions in aid of? Mind your own business. Come on, Tucker."

He got on his pushbike, ready to pedal off, but stopped dead when Joe produced his revolver. He glared, and the anger did not leave his face. His companion put out his hands in a gesture, his own bike, loaded with gear, leaning against his thigh. "Take it easy, mates," he said. "Darky here, he don't mean nothing. He just flies off in a temper . . ."

Joe cut him short by telling them to get in the car. He told them we were taking them in for questioning. They didn't like it, but they had no choice. We made Darky sit in the front with Joe. I sat in the back with Tucker. Their bikes were lashed on the boot.

There was no talk. Not for a long time. Then Tucker

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turned to me. "I thought you said we was going into the Port."

"That's right."

"Well, this ain't the way."

I didn't answer him, though he looked for the answer. When he saw I wanted no talk with him he turned away and looked out at the barren country. There was a hot wind blowing, and the temperature must have been eighty, though it was only ten o'clock in the morning. But that was nothing at that time of the year in those parts.

"You got other business first, have you?" Tucker said. "Before we go to the Port, I mean."

"That's right."

He nodded, satisfied that he had picked the truth. "I don't know what you want to question us for. We've been through it."

"What?"

He looked impatient. "The Creighton woman—that's what it's all about, ain't it? Well, ain't it?"

Joe called back from the front: "Why don't you cut the cackle, mister, and be nice and quiet like your mate here?"

I was looking at this fellow's shoulders, this Darky Kelso. They looked packed with power. Big hands, too. I reckoned he could go a bit. A proper tough customer. I was glad I had the gun. Old Tucker was no angel, either. Cunning as bush rats, both of them. That's how I figured it.

You could feel the temperature rising, and the hot wind getting hotter. My mouth was like an alum bin. The trees drooped lifeless and even the scant grass lay wilting like straw. The shade in the car only seemed to intensify the glare. The only thing that seemed to thrive on the heat was the saltbush.

We struck off down a bush road, across the dry shoals of a parched creek and pulled up at the old house standing alone in that fuming country. There was nothing else for miles.

"What have we come here for?" Tucker said.

"Get out."

The heat blazed on our shoulders, burning through the cloth. The hot wind fanned up in gusts. Even the dogs only barked half-heartedly. A few fowls dawdled away from the shade of the peppercorn tree and back again as we went up and knocked on the blistered door. The old weatherboards were warped and crinkled. I thumped the corrugated iron tank and it rang empty at the second rim up.

Pearlie Kelly opened the door. She was barbed wire in petticoats. A bush-fire blonde, about 25, pretty in a wild

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way but more impregnable than an armoured car. She was born and bred a cow-cocky's daughter, looking after her three brothers till they went and then her old man until he died. Joe and I had seen her only once before, in town, when she attended the coroner's inquest. Then she wore a dress long out of fashion and a hat like a crow's nest but prettied up for the occasion. Now she was in trousers and blouse that fitted her too soon, everywhere. Her feet were bare. "What do youse want?" she said. Her eyes were spiky and suspicious.

Joe said we were police; we wanted to come in. We went in. The furniture was scrappy and home-made.

"What's this all about, eh?" Pearlie said. "What are them fellers doing here?"

"We came for the money, Pearlie."

"What money?" Pearlie said, snapping with spirit, her big eyes aflame. "What money are you talking about, eh?"

"The haul from the Creighton homestead."

Pearlie stared with her mouth open as though she had been stunned. "You must be mad."

"Two thousand quid in notes," Joe said. "And a heap of jewellery."

She looked around at every one of us as though she thought it was some big joke, but couldn't be sure. She charged to the door and opened it wide. "You get to hell out of here!"

Joe shrugged. "Don't carry on, Pearlie. Be a good girl and tell us where it is. Come on now."

She smacked his face, quick like a striking snake, so fast, just from where her hand was. No telegraphing, no pulling the arm back. She might have made a good pug with a lovely cross. But Joe was fast, too. He smacked her right back, but not as hard. "Shut the door," he said.

"Shut it yourself," she said.

I kicked the door shut.

"Listen, Pearlie," Joe said. "I won't beat around the bush. Here's the cards on the table. We all know that four weeks ago Mrs. Creighton at Kilbri Station was murdered and robbed. These two jokers, Darky and Tucker, were camped a mile from the homestead. They were roped in with other suspects. All were cleared." Joe walked up to Pearlie. "And it was you that cleared these two, the most logical suspects."

"How could we have done it?" burst out Tucker.

"You were their only witness, Pearlie," Joe said. "You happened to be coming back from town in your sulky when

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you passed their campfire and saw them there. At least, that was your story."

"And it's the truth," Pearlie said. "What else would I tell you police and the coroner when it's the truth, eh?"

"And at the time she seen us," Tucker cut in, "Mrs. Creighton wasn't even dead then, according to the doctor and them. She wasn't killed till an hour later. So that puts the knocker on that."

"Sure," Joe agreed. "If we take Pearlie's word for it."

Pearlie looked furious, but she kept the words in.

"For our money," Joe said, "Darky and Tucker here never stopped being the logical suspects. So we did a little digging. Just a little digging. And, Pearlie, we know that you and old Darky Boy here have rolled in the clover before today."

"What the hell do you mean by that?" Pearlie said stormily.

"He worked here for your old man."

"For a month or two," she snapped back. "Five years ago. I hardly remember him."

"And you mean he doesn't bowl in and say good-day to you every time he's up this way?"

"What would he be doing up this way?"

"A knockabout worker like Darky?"

Darky Kelso made a step forward. But I was watching him, and he knew that. His eyes were blazing. "Why don't you leave her alone, copper? I'm nothing to her and you know it. Why don't you get out and look for the real crook instead of trying to fit us with something we didn't do?"

Joe heard him out. Then he looked at Pearlie. "The way we see it, you fronted for this joker and his mate—you're in it with them and the loot's around here. When the time's ripe you'll bring it out of hiding and live happily ever after."

"Search then, why don't you, if you think that."

"I'll make a deal with you, Pearlie. Show us where the money is and we'll keep you out of it."

"God," Pearlie said, exasperated. "There's no telling you, is there? Get out of my place. Get to hell."

Joe looked at me. We could see it would be a tough proposition breaking her down, tough as we might get. And, anyway, we were only working on a theory; we could be wrong. But we had another manœuvre up our sleeve. I opened the door and motioned Tucker and Darky outside. Joe said: "We'll be back, Pearlie. Think it over. We'll search if we have to."

Pearlie snorted. "Do what you bloody like."

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"You can say goodbye to them," Joe said, gesturing. She only sniffed.

The heat was intense, withering. The temperature must have been up near the hundred. The hot blasts of the wind scorched our faces. We noticed Tucker and Darky walking with their backs turned to it, and we did the same. I was glad to get into the car though the metal was red-hot to the touch. Strike me flat, fancy living here, I thought, like Pearlie Kelly and people like that. Give me the bright lights any day. Still, it's what you're brought up with; smoky chimneys and rushing crowds, or stars and bullfrogs.

We all had a short drink from the waterbag, and got going. We drove for about an hour, and found our own road over bumpy tussock into a lonely and deserted place, a region where it seemed the heat and glare were even greater. The air danced and flickered like liquid glass. It was boiling off the car in shimmering waves. The few straggly trees looked as dry as waiting torches. The earth was ripped in gaping splits and the blazing rocks glistened like river stones. A flying crow suddenly dropped from the sky in a black tatter. Tucker pointed to a hopeless tree nearby. On the ground underneath lay dead sparrows.

"She's hot when that happens, I tell you," he said. "Near one hundred and twenty, if I know anything, and still rising. Get out of here and into the shade or we'll all cop it." His face was going puce. We were all breathing hard. "What's the caper, anyway? What've you brought us out here for?"

Joe gave him a pencil and paper. "We want a confession."

"What do you mean, confession?"

"You know what I mean. Write it and sign it."

"I ain't writing nothing," Tucker said. "Nothing to write."

"You and this no-hoper killed old Mrs. Creighton and robbed her, and you know it."

Tucker dragged in breath. I prodded him with the revolver. It only made him defiant. "You got no right," he spluttered.

His mate turned, those strange eyes of his blazing. "You bloody coppers, you're all right. You can't solve this case, so you force a confession out of us. Then you think it'll all be cleared up and put away. Settled. Don't matter who you get as long as you get someone."

"We're waiting," Joe said. "We can wait all day."

"You must be kidding," Kelso grunted.

"I'm not kidding," Joe said. "That's one thing you can be sure about."

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"Two more hours'll see you out, mister," Kelso said. "See us all out. We'll be cooked to a turn, roasted alive."

"We can sit it out as long as you," Joe said. "The move's yours."

For a full minute Kelso glared at Joe. Then he snarled at Tucker: "Give him his confession. We'll deny every word of it. We'll say it was forced and how."

"What'll I write?" Tucker said.

Joe dictated a few simple words by which Tucker and Darky admitted to the murder of Lucy Creighton. Then they both signed it. Kelso flung the paper at Joe. "Like I said, we'll deny every word of it."

"That's stupid, Darky, spilling your guts like that," Joe said. "Tipping your hand at this stage of the game. You're not thinking sharp. Not like you."

Kelso rushed on angrily: "You wait till we get back to the police station."

Joe folded the paper and put it in his pocket. "Who said you're going back to the police station?"

"What do you mean?"

"Get out of the car," Joe said.

"Why ain't we going to the police station?" Tucker said.

"How can you when you're dead?" Joe said.

"Dead?" Tucker croaked.

"Yeah. You know how it happened. We caught up with you. We got your confession. You turned on us. There was a blue and we had to let you have it. Hurry up, get out."

They were silent, letting the hopelessness of their predicament sink in. It was just the reaction we had hoped for. This was our second plan to break them down if we hadn't been able to do it at Pearlie Kelly's place. We had no intention of shooting them, only of scaring them to death so we could get what we wanted. But this business of making them get out of the car—that was new. I realised what Joe was up to, though. The day was on our side. We hadn't picked it, but since it turned out this way, on fire, there was no reason why we shouldn't take advantage of it for our purpose—to break these men wide open so we could find out what we wanted to know. They were hard nuts to crack.

"For God's sake, give us a fair go," Tucker said. "You wouldn't do that to a man."

"Get out, quick," I told him. "You, too."

Tucker swallowed, gasping. "You don't know that wind. It's a killer. Nothing living can stand up to it. If you don't

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bake, you suffocate. Your skin blisters, it dries out, it gets hard like the bark of a tree."

"Shut the gab and do what you're told."

Tucker got out, shielded his eyes with his hand. Kelso was doing the same. Joe ordered Tucker to go around the front of the car and join him.

"God Almighty," Tucker said. "Give us a chance!"

They stood with their backs to the wind that came in searing blasts. It was bad enough in the car, but it was raging white-hot out there. The sun flared to hurt the eyes. The sky was coppery. I felt sick. I could see Joe was doing it hard, too. But each of us felt we were close to victory. We needed to be close. We had to get out of it soon. A man was sitting in a kiln with the flame all round him.

Kelso's face, though, as he looked at us, took on the grimness of stone. "You bastards are not human," he said. "Put a bullet in us and be done with it."

"No!" Tucker put his head inside the car. His face was plum-coloured. I didn't want to do it but I pushed him back.

"A deal," Joe said. "Take us to the money and you live."

"There is no stinking money," Kelso said. "And if there was . . . like hell we'd take you to it."

"Split it with us," Joe said, gasping out the words. "Give us half and you can have your confession back, and you're free. We'll forget about it."

The look on Kelso's face was one of jeering contempt.

"I'll give you ten seconds," Joe said.

He nodded to me as he started to count. I'd fire between them, I thought, if I had to. I moved the gun from one to the other. I could feel the sun burning on the barrel. It burned on my hand like scalding water. I don't know why they didn't break. They had no way of knowing we were bluffing; unless they sensed it.

Joe finished counting. I pulled the trigger, but nothing happened. The firing mechanism jammed, probably warped by the heat. I knew this in the flash of a second; but in the same instant Kelso lunged forward and I collected his knuckles. I was looking through a gauze curtain. I vaguely heard shouts and grunts, and I knew Joe was struggling. It must have been only a minute or two. When I came round I was lying beside Joe in the terrible sun. Tucker and Darky were in the car, and Darky had the gun.

"We ought to peg the bastards out to grill," I heard Tucker say.

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"I'd do it, too. Like a shot. If it didn't mean putting ourselves in. Their mates'll know all about them coming after us. No, we'll take 'em back, that's the move."

"Back?"

"Back where they came from. That ought to get this hounding off our backs for good."

We only heard the words as in a dream. Stupefied, sick with sunstroke, we were only too willing to obey Kelso's order to get in the car. He fired the pistol to show us that it was useful again. Tucker took it and I lolled in the back with him. Joe drooped in the front. We had no need of being watched, neither of us. The trip back was murder, the hot wind blowing and burning everything before it. Only once Kelso stopped—to tear the confession paper to shreds and scatter it abroad.

At the police station, though, they got a smack in the kisser. When they took us inside—we were too sick to give a damn, anyway—and smugly told the crusty old sergeant they had rescued a couple of his men he angrily demanded to know what the hell they thought they were up to. We were not his men. We were not even police. Then Tucker and Kelso put us in properly. We had to explain we suspected them and had the idea of forcing them to tell us where the money was. If they were guilty they couldn't have done anything about it; they would have had to keep quiet.

We got time for impersonating police, for intimidation, assault, threatening language and a few others. But it was a good try. And we wouldn't have made bad cops at that. Because we were right.

Thieves, it's true, fall out, even thieves as tight-lipped and loyal as they were. Darky and Pearlie took off with the money and left Tucker penniless. He squealed, nailing Kelso with the murder with himself as accomplice and Pearlie the perjuring witness. They all went into boob as we came out.

That was the only time Wild Joe Farmer and I had a serious shot at easy money, though we got up to all kinds of other hooligan stunts back there in the days of our wild oats when we knocked around together. We're respectable family men now, live in the suburbs, work for a living, and push a lawnmower on Sundays. And lucky to be doing it, I reckon. If Kelso had known out there in the never-never that we were not cops but only would-be hi-jackers, I have no doubt he would have finished us off or left us to the heat and the crows. You can bet on it.

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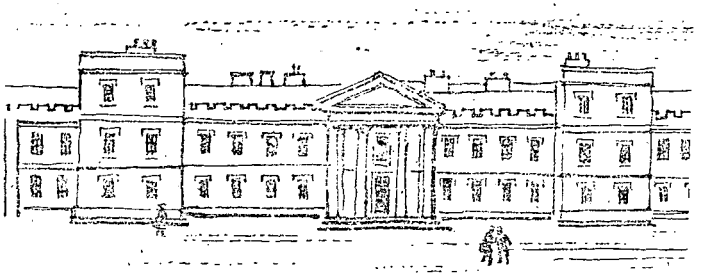

THE OLD BOYS

BY WINSTON GRAHAM

KENDRICK hadn't been near his old school for years, but an appointment in the town and an hour or so to spare before the next train out, gave him the chance to walk up and look around.

When he turned in at the gates he expected to see the place swarming with boys, and it took a minute or two to work out the date and to realise that the school had broken up probably yesterday or the day before. You get out of the habit of remembering. There were only two figures in sight and they were gardeners mowing the headmaster's lawn; and there was a solitary lop-eared dog chasing the pigeons around Newcome's Tower.

But it didn't matter much; perhaps it was for the best, Kendrick thought, as he walked in past the porter's lodge and the chapel. Alone like this, without today's hefty youths milling all round, it was easier to think back to what it had been like long ago.

New Field, for instance, where the First XI cricket was played; there didn't seem a blade of grass different. He remembered the one time he'd made a decent score: forty-seven against Stanmore—then that fool Smithfield had called him for a short run. The only occasion he'd ever been near fifty. The number of times he'd raced round the edge of this field, too—there was fire and brimstone if you ran *across* it—until he was nearly late for locking-up.

Up there, was the window of his last study-dormitory.

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When it was hot in the evening you could just squeeze yourself out on that tiny balcony and be full in the sun. The setting sun struck fire from the window today; he wondered who inhabited that room now, whether the iron bed still had one leg shorter than the other three so that you had to wedge it so as not to rock in your sleep. And Beller's Quad: the dismal parades there as a new boy; the Stinks Lab. on the other side.

The formative years, they were supposed to be. Well, well, he didn't know whether they'd formed him much. He'd gone along, free-wheeling most of the time, just getting by, enjoying himself on the whole; but he'd had a lot more fun since. It was piffle to talk about . . .

The bright shafts of sunlight were casting long shadows between the sham Gothic arches, and it looked to him as he was about to turn away that there was someone standing at the corner of Small Quad. He veered over that way and saw there was.

The odd thing was that the figure had something quite familiar about it, but he scoffed at himself for thinking so. After all these years you didn't suddenly bump into a man who'd . . . Well, it certainly wasn't one of the boys, anyway. A master probably. Out of the sun it was easier to see.

Rather a big chap in a long, dark overcoat and a green felt hat, with a pipe in the corner of his mouth. It seemed nearly like two lifetimes since 1937, and as he got closer Kendrick still told himself he was wildly mistaken. Yet why do some men grow up and broaden and go grey and still look exactly and unmistakably the same as they did at eighteen? Perhaps it's not so much that they grow middle-aged as that they have been middle-aged all the time. Clamp was such a one. He . . .

The man in the dark coat finished stubbing a finger into his pipe and moved off; his figure disappeared suddenly in the shadow of the cloister and might never have been there. Kendrick frowned. Then he saw it again.

"Clamp," he called. "I say, Clamp!"

The figure stopped and turned. It took its pipe out of its mouth and stared.

"It *is* Clamp!" Kendrick exclaimed as he came up. "Well, my saints, what a chance!"

Clamp narrowed his eyes. "I'm sorry, I don't think I know you, sir . . ." He hesitated. "Oh it can't be . . . is it Kendrick?"

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"Right first time," Kendrick laughed, and they shook hands. Clamp's hand was cold and clammy and had no grip at all. He had begun to smile but the smile had withered on his face.

Kendrick said: "I don't know what the chances are against this happening! What on earth brings you here this afternoon of all afternoons? I haven't seen you since I left school, and I've only been back here twice in all these years!"

"It's not perhaps such a coincidence," Clamp said stiffly. "I come quite often. I live only a mile or two away. Perhaps you didn't know that, eh?"

"I certainly didn't. I live in London. I'm carrying on my father's firm—estate agency, you know—and had to come down here about the Compton estate, which we're handling... And you? You're fatter, of course, but I'd know you anywhere. You haven't really changed."

They began to walk together along the cloister and then out of Small Quad and beside the Second XV football pitch. At school Kendrick had not been a close friend of Clamp—a rather intense, humourless type—but after the creeping melancholy of his own company he was delighted to find someone of his own year to talk to. He ignored Clamp's cold manner and tight-drawn mouth and chatted on about Staggers their housemaster who had died ten years ago, about Mortimer who had done so well in oil, about Ross and Harris who had been killed in the war, and Valentine who had made the England rugger team and now was apparently in some dead-end job in Hove.

The sun had gone and the twilight was shorter than usual because of the heavy clouds blowing up from the west. Clamp, Kendrick thought, might have been a bit middle-aged at eighteen; it was equally true that at forty-six he didn't seem to have lost any of his schoolboy words or mannerisms. He was behaving now like a sulky boy. Or perhaps it was more than that. His knuckles were quite white where they gripped his pipe.

"Is something the matter, Clamp? Have I said something out of place?"

Clamp stopped. "Mean to say you don't remember?"

"Remember? What?"

"The last days of our last term, Kendrick. Before we both left the old school for good."

Kendrick stared. "Not a thing. Should I?"

"Mean to say you don't remember about Veronica Fry?"

Kendrick's greying eyebrows came together in a frown.

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"Veronica Fry? I remember the name... But of course! She was that glamorous town girl we were both taking out that last term!"

"She was the chemist's daughter," said Clamp coldly.

"Yes."

"Dear little Veronica. How that brings back memories!" Kendrick sighed. "Well, well. Oh, yes, of course, we had words about her, didn't we?"

"We did. You called me a tin-pot Romeo and a dirty skunk!"

"Did I?" Kendrick chuckled. "I say, that was going it a bit, wasn't it? Tell me about her; I remember the row but forget the exact details."

"You said I was behaving badly towards her by not inviting her to that Breaking-up Concert on the Wednesday. You said I'd been making up to her all term and was then just going to walk out of her life. You said I must be ashamed of her and, just to prove *you* were not, you were going to invite her to the concert yourself!"

"Ah, yes. Go on, go on. I remember I read you a bit of a lecture, didn't I?"

"If calling me a dirty skunk can be called a lecture. Don't you remember the rest?"

"No."

"I said: 'All right, if you think I'm a dirty skunk, we'll meet tomorrow morning, behind the chapel, and I'll teach you which of us is the skunk!'"

"Yes, I do remember now. It's damned funny to look back..."

Clamp's story had indeed brought back many memories. Discipline had been fairly lax under old Staggers just before he retired, and as prefects that last term or so they'd been able to do much as they liked. Of course it had all been painfully innocent and very respectable. "Taking out a town girl" hardly described the meetings in a bun shop, the stolen half-hours on the river, the rivalries and pairings that took place at the School Dance which was given every December in the Town Hall.

But at the time it had all been breathless and very dashing.

"And what happened?" Kendrick said.

"When?"

"About our fight behind the chapel?"

"You never turned up."

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Kendrick roared with laughter. "Of *course*. I remember now! Did you ask Veronica to the concert after all?"

"Yes."

"I didn't go. I suppose it was a bit of a trick, old man, really. You see, I never had the least intention of asking her to the concert, or anywhere else—not because I was ashamed to, or thought you were, but because I'd found another girl and wanted to take her to the flicks instead. Veronica was dead set on going to the concert, and I was afraid I'd be let in for taking her if I didn't goad you into action. It was obvious you were getting a bit tired of her, too, and I had to make you keener again.

"Well, there's nothing like a little rivalry . . . I find it in my profession constantly; two people after the same house, as it were; it makes all the difference.

"I wonder you didn't tumble to it, because if I'd *really* wanted to take her I shouldn't have lectured you on doing the straight thing!"

"And the next morning?"

"I remember I did set my alarm for six. I was quite willing to punch your nose if you wanted me to. But lying in bed I thought, what price glory! I'm going to have another hour in bed. And I did!"

"You never turned up!"

They had crossed beside the cricket pitch and now stood in the shadow of the school chapel.

Clamp stopped. "You never turned up," he said yet again.

"Well, there was another reason. This other girl I'd dated—I wish I could remember her name—Anne something, was it?—she'd quite caught my fancy, and I was meeting her again that last afternoon before I caught the train home. And I thought: What a fool I'll look turning up for my appointment with a black eye and a swollen nose. I was rather vain about my looks in those days."

Clamp turned to him. "You never turned up and you never explained! I never saw you again from that day to this. That's what *I* call the act of an absolute rotter—a dirty skunk, in fact!"

"Oh, come off it, man," Kendrick exclaimed, himself irritated now. "Keep the thing in proportion. It all happened *twenty-eight* years ago. That's more than a quarter of a century. I'm prepared to admit that you've a marvellous memory but—"

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"My memory's quite a normal one. It shows what a shallow cad you are that you should have forgotten all about it!"

They had come to a stop again in the shadow of the trees. Kendrick shrugged his shoulders. "Well, really, if that's the way you feel I think it's time you went to see a psychiatrist. I'm really sorry for you. I never heard a man talk such damned rot in my life, and I'll wish you good afternoon here and now."

"Wait!" Clamp caught his arm as he turned. "It may be a quarter of a century since I issued that challenge but it still stands! And you've insulted me afresh over again this afternoon. Here we are, in just the spot behind the chapel where we agreed to meet. Now put up your hands! Go on, put them up!"

Kendrick stared at the other in incredulous astonishment. It was now dusk. There was no-one about, and the gardeners, if they were still working, were right round the other side of the school.

"I'll do nothing of the sort. Take your hands off me, you silly man!"

Clamp's answer was to release him and give him a hearty, painful thump on the ear.

Kendrick saw red. He swung round-arm with his fist and caught Clamp on the side of the jaw.

Clamp hit him in the eye.

They closed, two middle-aged portly men, out of temper and out of condition. They grappled like elderly dinosaurs, broke apart, came together again; then they fell into the bushes with an enormous thump and flurry and crackle of leaves.

In half a minute the years had rolled away; Clamp had Kendrick by the arm and was trying to twist it; but Kendrick heaved Clamp off him and fell on him as he tried to rise. Stertorously they rolled over.

Then, as they struggled, another figure appeared from round the corner of the chapel.

Although the school had broken up yesterday the Head had not yet discarded his gown.

They both saw him at the same moment. They both stopped fighting.

Then Clamp muttered, "*Cave!*"

They both scrambled up to go. The Head had not seen them yet but he was coming in their direction.

Kendrick moved to duck towards the chapel alley, but Clamp

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caught his arm. "No, that way's blocked. Follow me, quickly."

Clutching battered hats, they crawled panting through the shrubbery towards a five-foot brick wall.

"Who's that?" said a voice from behind them. "Who's there?"

"Quick, this leads into Goodwin's Lane," Clamp whispered. "Then we're safe enough . . ."

He tried to lead the way but the wall was too much for him. His brown suède shoes scrabbled ineffectually at the mortar.

"Here, let me." Kendrick knelt down and gave Clamp a hoist. Clamp arrived at the top of the wall, balancing precariously like Humpty Dumpty; he lent a hand, and with its help Kendrick joined him.

A black chasm yawned.

"It's a bit farther this side," Clamp panted.

But the Head was pushing his way through the shrubbery. They jumped, landing on all fours in muddy earth. Clamp managed to get up first. Again he gave Kendrick a hand, and then they both made off like thieves towards the lights at the end of the lane.

After a minute Kendrick said: "I don't think he was near enough to recognise us."

"Not you, certainly," gasped Clamp. "But I've met him two or three times. It would be damned undignified to be caught out like that!"

As Kendrick remembered this lane, it led to another which ran beside a stream into the little town; but when they came out he stared about in surprise. A town street, brightly lighted; the stream had disappeared; modern villas lined the road, and then shops.

"It's a bit different since our time, Kendrick," Clamp said. "The school's practically surrounded these days."

They stood there regaining their breath and brushing themselves down. Kendrick's ear felt too big for his face, and Clamp's nose had been bleeding.

After a minute Clamp hesitantly raised a hand and began to brush down the back of Kendrick's clothes. They were thick with dirt and leaves.

"What time's your train, Kendrick?"

"Six-forty. If I turn left here it'll lead to the station, won't it?"

"Yes. I'm coming that way, too."

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They walked off together in silence. Clamp dabbed his nose.

He grunted and hesitated once or twice and then said: "Don't know what got into me just now, Kendrick. Seeing you after all this time, it just bubbled up. And the way you treated it, as if it was a joke."

"Well," said Kendrick, his good humour never far away, "I must say I didn't come back expecting anything quite like this!"

They walked down the street into the town.

"I remember this part now," Kendrick said. "That's the old bookshop, isn't it? And that's the place where they sold those hot buns."

"They were first-class, weren't they."

"Yes, Clamp, it all comes back."

"Remember what a row there was that time Thomson was caught smoking in the White Hart?"

"Good lord, yes."

Clamp brushed a last bit of moss from his lapel. "Maybe you've time for a cup of tea, Kendrick? What time does your train go? Oh, yes, you've told me. Well, there's half an hour yet."

They had stopped outside a tea-shop.

"Well, I really should be getting along." All this horse-play had touched up the rheumatism in Kendrick's shoulder. "I can get something at the station."

"Nonsense; I owe you that, at least. I've got to go in here and a cup of tea will do us both good. Come along, my dear fellow. I insist."

Kendrick hesitated and then gave way. At the door of the shop they each waited for the other.

"No," said Clamp heartily. "You first, Kendrick; you're my senior by three months."

They went in.

The shop was crowded, but Clamp led the way clumsily but unerringly to a corner table at which sat a plump, grey-haired lady.

"Darling," he said nervously, "sorry I'm late. I bumped into an old school-friend of mine up there. Name of Henry Kendrick. Wonder if you'll remember him. Kendrick, may I introduce you to my wife. Perhaps you'll remember her better under her maiden name of Veronica Fry."

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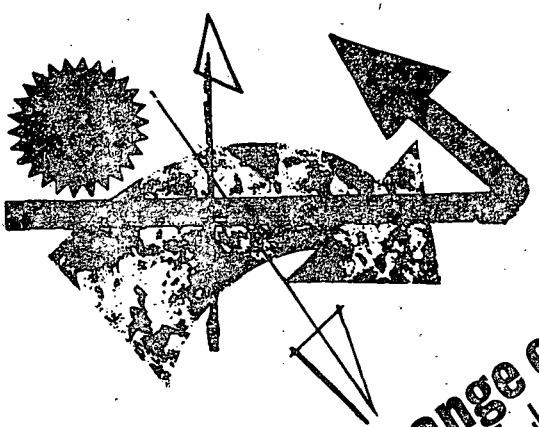

change of plan

BY BRUCE JAY FRIEDMAN

AND so finally, after four years of drift, they had found all exits barricaded and got married in a sudden spurt, bombing their parents with the news. A Justice had been rounded up, also uncles in the area. After the ceremony, Cantrow's new father-in-law had taken him around and said, "It's going to be great, isn't it?"

"How can you say that?" said a stray uncle, wandering by. "Which one of us knows such things?"

That night there was a need to get away, to sail as quickly as possible into the eye of the marriage, and off they went, South, driving in a frenzy, all that afternoon, all that night. Once, bleary-eyed, they had gone through a Southern town with two wheels up on a sidewalk. Later, moving through a misted patch of farmland, Cantrow spotted a monster turkey, his first live one, and gunned the engine, thinking it was a dreaded hawk. Only once had they stopped, for chocolate frosteds, Cantrow tipping his into her lap. With soaked shorts, she broke into laughter, then chuckled her way through five more towns. This is the kind of sense of humour she has, Cantrow thought. And I didn't even catch that.

Curling from side to side, as though the car itself were drunk, they were somehow blessed, missing head-on collisions; at the hotel, Cantrow told the clerk, "We're not tramps," and got a room. Upstairs, zombie-like, they made a feeble pass

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at sex, wanting to try it married, but collapsed instead into sleep.

Two hours later, hardly fresh, Cantrow awoke and stared at his bride's slack form. So that's what I've got, he thought. Maybe for forty-seven years.

Down below, at the poolside, the lifeguard winked and said, "Ho, ho, ho," a standard greeting to honeymooners.

The pool water slapped Cantrow awake; so did a blonde girl, sitting at the edge. She had a nice fleshiness, a good hundred and thirty pounds to his bride's hundred and four. He caught her scent, too, just like honey. He had never really smelled honey, but guessed it must be in that family.

"I didn't know they allowed big puppies in pools," she said. And now there was her voice, crushed, feminine for a change.

At a club, once, he had introduced his bride to a football-star friend of his. "She's okay," the friend had said privately, "but I could never live with those pipes of hers."

Cantrow fished himself out of the water and sat by the girl's side. She was eighteen, from Minnesota, vacationing between terms. These were her folks, at the terrace bar, the heavy-set man and the handsome woman in the white silk dress. Cantrow and the girl kidded around, wound up tickling each other.

Then the shadow of the hotel seemed to fall on his back like a heavy beam. "You probably know I'm married," he said. "Just since yesterday. Down here on my honeymoon."

"And what else is new?" she said. Cheered on, Cantrow told her some jokes; they teased each other.

But there was a whisper of difference. Before it became a roar, Cantrow suddenly panicked, took her arm and said, "Look, this is crazy, but I've got to see you one more time and find out something. I really have to." Their glances met, combined, turned soft together.

"We don't stay here," she said. "At the Regent."

"I'll be there at six," he said. "I'll work it out. For cocktails."

"Guess who I met at the pool," he told his bride, later, in the room. "Crazy guy from school, Blaum, always wore a tooth around his neck, called it the Sacred Tooth of Mickasee. Didn't care what you did to him, beat him up, anything, long as you didn't touch his tooth. 'Fool with my tooth and you're in trouble,' he'd say to you. Anyway, I told him I'd meet him later tonight for a drink. No girls, though. He's not

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himself when any are around and I want to see him carry on about that tooth again." He hurried on. "I'll just have a quick one with him and then I'll come back and we can really start."

In the early evening, he dressed carefully, getting his hair just right, one loop down over the eye, with feigned carelessness, for extra appeal. At the Regent, she sat with her folks at a table, but joined him immediately at the bar. He liked the size of her in heels, the weight of her, the bounce of her hair, the honeyed look. A combo began to work in a deep beat; he gathered her in, made it once around the floor, then put his nose in her hair and said, "That did it. Over to your folks we go."

The parents were pushed back from the table, comfortable, expectant, as though waiting for a curtain to part.

Cantrow stood before them and began to speak, then said, "Hold it a second," and unbuckled his belt for comfort. "Okay, sir," he said, "I've just made one helluva mistake, about the biggest one a guy can make. But I met your daughter and I'm undoing it, no matter what it takes. You see, I got married yesterday and I'm down here on my honeymoon, but it was a bad idea from the beginning. There wasn't a damned thing in the world between us and I just got married because it seemed like the only way out. Anyway, I met your daughter and she's the one I want. I know it's crazy, but I could tell in a second. You should see the difference between them. There's no comparison. I just had to be with her a few minutes and I saw all the things I was really after. She's easier, more feminine, just real comfortable to be with. I don't know exactly what I expect from you. What I'd like, really, is for you to study the look in my eyes and know that I've never been more sincere in my life and that I'm not fooling around and that I'm the right guy for her. I'm getting out of the thing and then I'm coming after your daughter, but I just wanted to lay it out on the table and see how it struck you, whether you were with me or against me."

The father yawned, drummed his fingers on the table and said, "Not if they stripped me naked and dragged me four times around the world. Over the desert, through the jungle, under the seven seas."

"Okay," said Cantrow. "Long as we're clear. But you don't know me, sir. You don't know what I can do. I'm coming after her anyway. Once I make up my mind on something, that's it.

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"First thing I've got to do is get out of it," he said, with a bow to the parents. "You take it easy, honey," he said, pecking her on the cheek.

"But I listen to my father," she said, as he walked to the door.

"Another thing about you that turns me on."

Pale and angular, Cantrow's bride slapped on pancake before a mirror.

"Hold it, hold it," he said, tearing into the room. "Whoa. We're not going out tonight. Any night, for that matter, unless we meet some day later on as platonic friends, and I'm not even really sure of that. There was no Blaum and no tooth. That is, there *is* a Blaum, and the tooth part was no lie either, but I didn't just meet him. It's a new girl I ran into at the pool. I don't see any point in describing what went on, because that would be just like waving a red flag in your face. What's important is us and how flat it's always been when you take away those first few weeks, just one, if you really want to be strict about it. Look, I'm pulling out. I admit, I shouldn't have gone this far, but I didn't see it clearly until just before at the pool. There's a whole other way. With us, it would be one long downhill ride. Get yourself someone else. I admit, I'll be a little shaky about that if I stop and think about it, but I can stand it. Meanwhile, I'm on my way."

"And I'm supposed to just listen to that?"

"Oh, we can kick it around if you like," said Cantrow, packing, "but how'd you like to lift this hotel on your back and move it across the street? That's roughly what you'd be up against trying to talk me out of this thing I've got in my head. Look, here's three hundred dollars for a start. I'm throwing in the car and just holler if you think that's not generous. The funny thing is, as we're making this break, I'm starting to like you more already.

"Maybe," he said, slamming shut his suitcase, "years later, when the sting is out of it for both of us, we really *can* meet for dinner."

That night, Cantrow flew North and woke up Wenger, his attorney-cousin, at midnight.

"Cantrow with an emergency," he said. "Remember that marriage I told you about? I've got to get out of it now. We were just hitched for the shortest time you can imagine and then the whole thing blew up. Anyway, I'm actually out

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of it already since there isn't anything—tornadoes, nuclear war, you name it—that could get me back in. So you just take care of the legal part. I've got five grand from the service and believe me it wasn't easy to save. Cut down on everything, meals included, to get it together. Anyway, use the whole bundle if you need to and keep the change. Just get me out of it."

"If we weren't cousins, you wouldn't call on me at this hour."

"I'll stick around one week, in case there are papers. Then I'm getting into something else."

"Hi, Mom," said Cantrow at his folks' apartment. "The entire marriage is down the drain, but don't worry, I'm in good health and got out clean."

"I saw the whole thing coming," said Cantrow's mother. "If you'd asked me I could have recited the entire story before it happened. Okay, how about a trip to Europe, all expenses for a month? To clear your head."

"No, Mom, I'm bunking in here for a week, then I've got to go out to the Mid-west on something."

"I knew it," she said. "Another little winner. One wasn't enough for my son. I can tell you the end of this story, too, if you want to sit and listen."

With great crankiness, Wenger gave the go-ahead and Cantrow took a plane West, then tracked the girl down to a small teachers' college of Episcopal persuasion. She lived with her folks and came home for meals.

His first night in town, Cantrow announced his presence to her mother at the door. "Hi, you probably remember me from the resort hotel. I don't expect you to let me see your daughter right off, but I thought I'd let you know I'm here and that wasn't a wild story I'd made up when I saw you at the bar."

"My daughter's preparing for bed," said the mother, easing the door shut. "She studies very hard and needs her sleep."

Later that night, Cantrow asked around and smoked out his one rival, a fair-skinned fellow of strange, shifting sexuality.

Sliding in beside him at a bleakly-lit college hangout, Cantrow ordered the local special beer and sandwiches, and said, "Hi, I've just come down here and what I'm after is Sue Ellen Parker. Now look, we can do this like gentlemen, you just tapering off with another date or two to save face, or else we can go to muscle. You look pretty well set up,

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but the point is, if we fight it doesn't matter how it goes. If you take me boxing, I'll bring in karate and if you know that I'll go to guns."

"Would you really do all those things?" said the fellow with a wet stare, kaleidoscopically shifting sexes before Cantrow's very eyes.

The road partially clear, Cantrow called the girl herself.

"I'd be teasing if I pretended not to be flattered, but it's just so completely out of the question," she said. "I mean with Mother and Dad. And me, sort of."

Undismayed, driven, Cantrow hung on, peppered her with calls, nourished himself on her great phone voice. One night that honeyed blonde fragrance seemed to trickle through the wire. She said she would sneak out and meet him on the corner. Cantrow hired a car, scooped her up, and off they drove in silence to a wooded place she knew. Thin, towering Minnesota trees, crowded together, stripped and haunted.

"I won't sleep with you tonight," she said, as they left the car, "but let's take off our clothes and run through there, as far as we can go."

"Suits me," said Cantrow, knowing instantly he'd been right.

And so they began. All the things he had missed. Nude walks and swims. Hours of savouring honeyed flesh. Sudden love, almost anywhere, under stairwells, beneath a tree. Giving everything. Wonder of wonders. Getting back.

"I knew I wasn't crazy," he told her one night, bewitched, at some lake's edge. "It must have been a hell of a jolt to all concerned, but I knew I was on the right track."

A month later she phoned, out of breath. "Dad's calling a truce. From now on, it's the front door for us, darling."

Legitimate now, Cantrow arrived that night in a suit and bow-tie.

"I never thought I'd see the day I'd be doing this," said her father. "But let's have us a handshake. You Eastern fellows sure are determined. Well, all the more power to you, son."

Later that night, passion undiminished, they made love in the parlour. The next night in her very room. Pacing himself, Cantrow waited another week then told her, "Look, I haven't been fooling around."

"I know, darling, I feel the same way. I've already said something and the folks' answer is, of course, anything we want."

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With blurred speed, the wedding plans were made. Cantrow's folks declined, but Wenger the lawyer came West with the final papers. Soon Cantrow, who had always dreamed of wearing tails, stood erect in them and watched strange blond people with Scandinavian profiles around him at the church.

Mr. Parker came over, cuffed him in friendliness and said, "Now this is one for the books, isn't it? The first time you came up to us and now here we are. I think it's great though, kind of thing you see in the movies." He disappeared.

Mrs. Parker took his place. Solid, tanned gold, an easeful, ripened version of her daughter. She took his arm and said, "I want you to know how warming I find all of this. And I have a confession to make. Even at the hotel I just knew. There was something so profound about the cast of your neck and shoulders."

"And how about how I feel," said Cantrow. "I get sick when I think of how I could have let the whole thing slide and muffed the chance of a lifetime. Sue Ellen. Being here in Minnesota. The things that have happened. Mr. Parker. You. Even the way you just said that. That it was all so warming. And what was that word you used about my neck and shoulders? You know once in a while I'd check myself in mirrors and there really was something about them, although I guess I'd be the last one to say it about myself. But what was that you called them? *Profound.*

"Oh, look," he said, covering her hand. "I wonder if we could just talk for a second. I'll talk and you don't say a word till I'm finished."

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LIMERICK . . . by Conrad Aiken

There once was a wicked young minister
whose conduct was thought to be sinister.
By ruses nightmarish
he seduced the whole parish
except for one squeamish old spinister.

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Happy Ever After?

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. . . by Sempé

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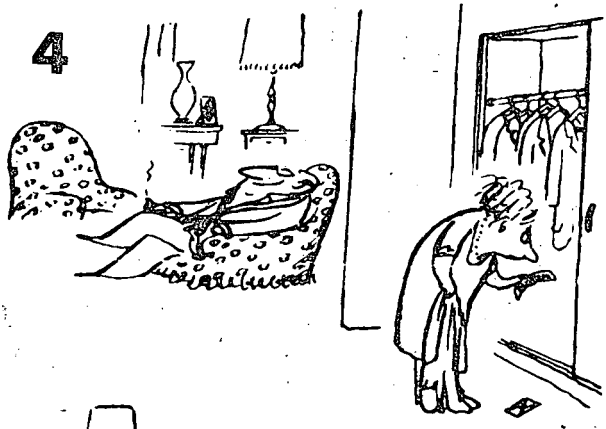

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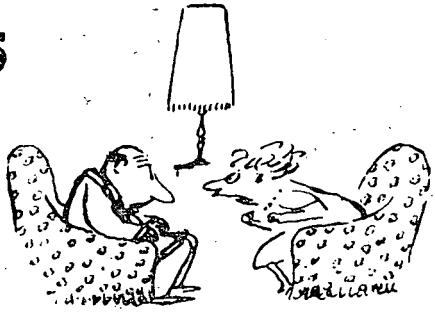

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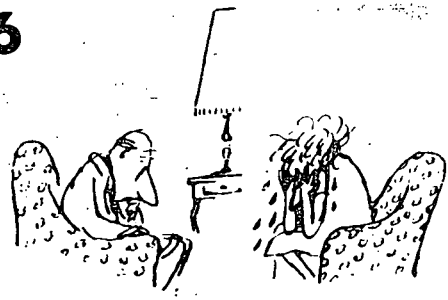

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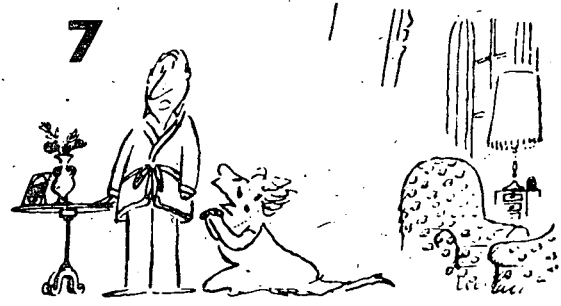

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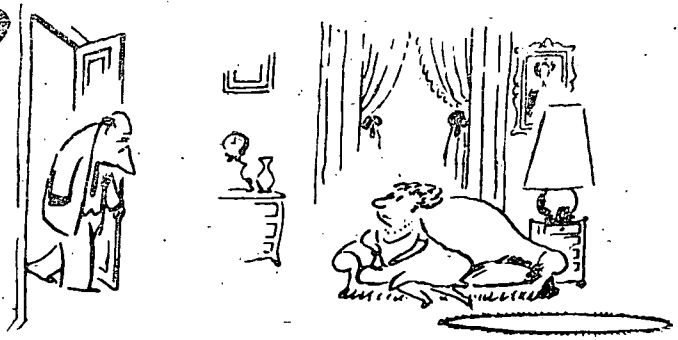

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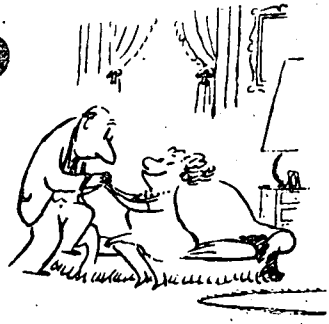

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The End . . . .?

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He had a guilty feeling that the face of the girl was familiar and so he dared not look at her again

IRON CITY

BY LOVELL THOMPSON

THERE is a rawness in the city of Liverpool that permeates the flesh and grips the vitals of a man who, like Gideon Grimes, is not vigorous. The city, as it stood in his mind, appeared coated with cold, cohesive dust. When he thought of the city he felt sticky particles rasping upon his fingertips and saw heavy dust-hardened raindrops, and fog stiffened by the filth of Liverpool. The odour of Liverpool was to him that of stale grease; even after he had crossed the Mersey Bar a taste of Liverpool clung in the back of his throat. Was it the queer name of the city that stamped this impression on him, or was it that it was the place where he had met Shank?

Gideon Grimes hated the city—and yet it was this city, phlegmatic and depraved, that beyond all others lay closest to the varied and beautiful ocean. The graceful ships of a hundred nations rested here, close to the stinking raw-boned docks. In the harbour the water was smooth, sluggish, and crusted with a gelatinous scum. Yet here, in spite of ugliness and crudity, the thousand-fingered hand of the ocean gently soothed the land. The mighty rhythm of the ocean's breath is sensitively felt in Liverpool. The scum upon the surface of the water assiduously charts upon the piles of the docks the record of each breath. Twice a year the ocean heaves a few vast equinoctial sighs, the tide rises high and in Liverpool the highest tide is more permanently recorded than the rest, by the scum mark on the piles, by the bits of debris shoved far up to a damp and rotting security beneath the bellies of the docks.

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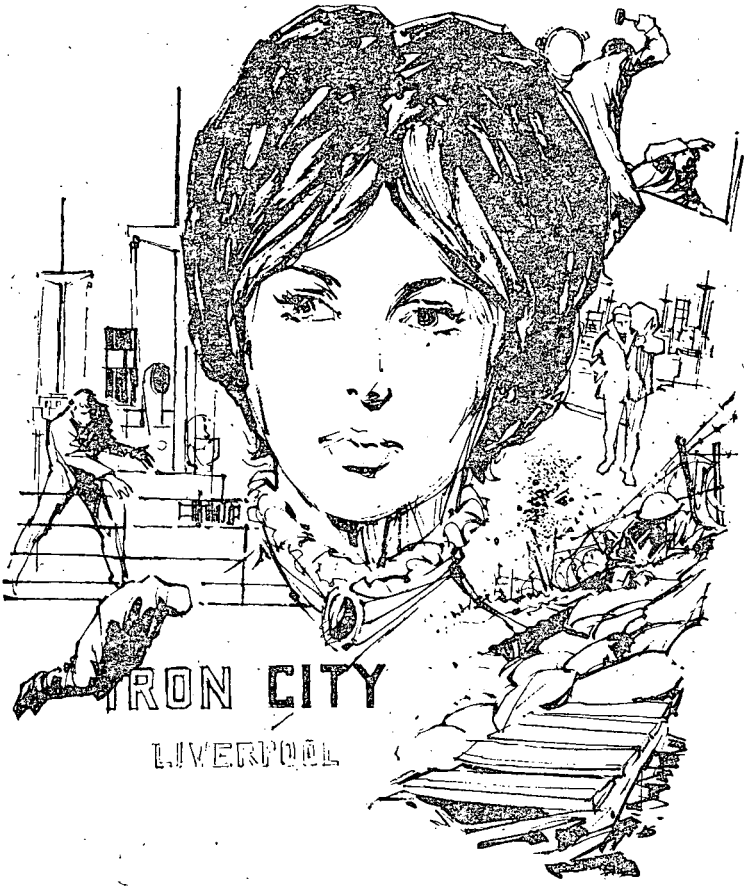

DRAWING BY
JON DAVIS

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Here on the harbour's edge human scum is also deposited and left till the next high tide reaches up for it once more. Thus the hand of the ocean reached for the man Shank, on the same September night that Gideon Grimes also embarked for America.

Under the shelter of the dock a few electric light bulbs shone listlessly. They were on the ends of long rods which stretched down out of darkness. They lit up the sordid dirt and scraps of paper upon the dock floor. Gideon Grimes tightened his muscles to try to stop shivering. The anguished clatter of a winch banged at the back of his head. He was weak. He was depressed. He gazed down the dockway into the murk as if in search of a reason.

And out of the murk came the man Shank, whose name he did not then know. He, too, bore a duffle-bag upon his shoulder. He leaned forward with it and thus was able to support it partly on his back and partly also upon his elbow, cocked up for the purpose with a hand upon his hip. His other arm, the left, with the fingers of the hand hooked into the fastening of the sea-bag upon his right shoulder, concealed his face. So Grimes observed the rest of him. He was shabby, neither dirty nor clean, neither tidy nor unkempt—he was utterly ordinary and he bent beneath his load like a tallow taper before a hot blaze.

When he had come quite close to the gang-plank before which Grimes stood, he threw down his duffle-bag. He was small, about the size of Gideon, and astonishingly thin, and his pinched face except for his eyes was no more unusual than the rest of him. His eyes looked as if their owner's line of vision travelled about twenty feet and then turned a right angle. The man looked as if he were trying to see around a corner; looked as if he did see around one; looked as if he saw nowhere else. He looked at Gideon Grimes, seeming to have to look away to get him in his line of vision, and he spoke.

"Say, brother, ain't there extra quarters on these ships, fellars like you going back—extra bunks I mean? Think I could stow away with you fellars—no-one would notice? Won't show up for boat drill. Slip ashore in Boston. What do you think, eh?"

"I guess so," said Gideon.

"I'll stick close to you," said Shank, and close he remained.

They laboured into the black belly of the ship.

On a ship of this type, what is often called the first deck is

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beneath the actual outside deck of the ship. By "outside deck" is meant what the ordinary man considers the deck of a ship—the outermost uppermost side which roofs in the hold and upon which the officers' quarters, funnels, and whatnot appear to be a superstructure. Beneath this outside deck is the first deck—a subterranean deck, as it were, and on it, forward in the bow, are quarters for the crew, rooms lined with bunks.

They walked this deck, Shank and Grimes, between rows of iron supports. The deck was dark and for the most part empty.

On this freighter, as on other ships of the same line, there were the extra quarters which Shank had asked about. These had been put in after the building of the ship, to accommodate extra hands required for the shipping of certain cargoes—a deckload of livestock, for instance. Thereafter these quarters were used as a sort of unofficial sub-steerage, where men whom the line desired to transport across the ocean were quartered.

The *Iron City* had a cabin for four next to these quarters. It was designed for those who were in charge of the men who worked on the cargo. Grimes made for this cabin, in the hope that the other free passengers might be sufficiently few for him to occupy it alone. Shank, however, followed him into the room, so Grimes directed him to throw his bag into a lower bunk and to crawl into an upper himself. Gideon did the same and the cabin was occupied. Other men following looked in but were directed to the larger bunk-room farther along.

Shank's scheme of stowing away was extraordinarily feasible. The captain of a freighter pays no attention to this idle element of his crew. There are say ten men in the extra quarters—most of them probably have been employed in bringing livestock from America to England; no-one ever sees them all together. The face of the stowaway becomes familiar. No-one realises that he is an extra. The officers are searching for a name on their lists which has no corresponding face, not for a face which has no name.

With blankets given out later by the purser, and with a dry straw mattress beneath him, Gideon felt warm and slept. As he dropped off, he noticed that a rod of light from one of the bulbs on the dock came through a doorway and through a port and at last rested upon the recumbent figure of Shank—this leech who clung to him—it lit Shank's face, his strange eyes now closed and his mouth now gently ajar.

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During the next day, the *Iron City* steamed through choppy water along the coast of Ireland. Hour after hour the high green coast passed by—the long miles marked by bulging headlands. Each, when first seen, appeared to come no nearer; ship and headland moved together, carried on the same subaqueous belt. But when attention was turned from the progress of the boat, the headlands leapt up upon it and stopped again when the eye was turned upon them as if they played a game.

As the day dwindled, the long, blinking beam of Fastnet Light rose in the west. The beam of this revolving star, like a gigantic compass describing an arc, traversed every few seconds a hundred-and-sixty-mile circle and yet found time in passing to pierce the eyeball of Grimes, who looked at it, with a fierce, curious stare.

Summoned by this wonder, and still smelling of stale daylight sleep, up the forward hatchway rose the fate-sent Shank to ask:

"What light is that?"

"Fastnet," said Grimes.

Shank looked while the night wind, sharp upon the fo'c's'lehead, hewed his heavy frowsy hair into a sculptured grace. Then he turned away to walk a stretch down the deck and return. Thus he came at intervals, bringing his pale face to meet the swinging light, then turned again to vanish as if into another world. And each time he came Gideon asked a question and Shank replied, gradually drawing the picture of a life.

With an artificial tension produced by his periodic walks down the deck, from which he would return still more stirred by the contemplation of his past, Shank held his listener, there on the deck of the *Iron City*. A constantly freshening wind gave to the man's talk an ominous crescendo and the scene was unified by one powerful trait of the man which emerged slowly from his story.

This was a genius for taking care of himself in perilous situations—a genius for always attaching himself to the person who was best fitted to look after him—a genius which had thus far never forsaken him.

In Egypt during the war he had found a six-foot-five Australian. He had followed this man as a jackal does a lion; he had watched with furtive curiosity the unending process of satisfying the lion's appetites, and he had picked up the mouthfuls which were thrown aside as too small to fill the throat of his patron. Into Arab villages where voluminous Arab

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women with tattooed faces beckoned, Shank followed Australia; he wet his feet where the big man wallowed; drank a glass where his companion drank a gallon; used the Australian's size and boldness to aid him in gleaning a small harvest of dissipation which Shank alone would never have had the courage or impressiveness to find, and in the end he would take Australia home.

"Women listen," said Shank, "when six-foot-five speaks to them."

On the bow of the battleship that the English were to beach as part of their desperate plan to land at Gallipoli, stood the big Australian. After the vessel had gently forced its keel into the smooth sand, he was one of the first over the gang-plank towards shore, and one of the many to be killed on that gang-plank—his superhuman appetites quenched by human death. Perhaps the last tremor of departing life woke the big man to consciousness once more, told him that, in his loneliness, many feet were stepping over him; then left him only time to curse the day that man was born to die. Perhaps, however, he never knew that Shank was not to take him home from this night of adventure as from the others.

Shank saw, and the bile of his belly was sour in his throat. Turkish lights and Turkish guns were trained upon the landing-point. Shank knew that the other end of that plank did not lie on the beach but in unending unconscious.

Then he saw a few men running to the unnoticed and slightly more seaward side of the bow, from where they dropped into the water and swam ashore. This was the thin road out that fate always sent to Shank. He hurled himself over the side and fell feet first into the bloody water with a thick splash like a June-bug in a mug of beer. But he was soon gathering his feet under him in the shallow water, safely landed beyond the feline stare of the searchlights . . .

Fastnet Light was barely discernible now and as the *Iron City* left the sheltering coast of Ireland, the wind grew stronger. The ship took the waves on her quarter. She wallowed deeply while each wave rolled upward along her side towards the scuppers amidships. Then, as the lifting power of the wave passed forward beneath the centre of the boat, the stern fell back and the bow rose dripping and stars and shreds of cloud appeared beneath the ship's rail. The last step in the cycle was a shuffling, falling movement as the ship fell backward and crabwise down the long back of the wave, while the wave cantered easily forward into the darkness like some unwieldy

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prehistoric animal wearing a small white nightcap of phosphorescent foam. The light upon the mast indicated upon the sky, as if with an extended little finger, an ellipse; and drew it neatly to a close as each wave passed. Shank's talk ceased; he felt sick and went below.

Often during the next thirty-six hours Grimes watched Shank stick his head out of the porthole above his bunk. He looked, at these moments, like a mouse with its head in a trap—hind quarters protruding, passionately limp.

He was very sick.

The fourth morning, however, was sunny with a light steadying head-wind and Shank, with a two days' beard upon his face, peered over the edge of his bunk with the light of life in his eye. After breakfast Shank followed Gideon up to the wheelhouse where it was sheltered—where the sun was tropical and where they lay half naked upon the deck. Here, stimulated by his sudden freedom from nausea and by his heavy drinking of tea, and hypnotised by the droning of the ship's propeller beneath them, Shank grew confidential.

"I've got a girl," said Shank. "And I've got money."

He reached for his coat, stiffly, as one from death revivified, and pulled out of it a worn imitation-leather wallet. From the wallet he drew a photograph and holding it in his wan yellow palm, he studied it for a long time. Grimes leaned over the man's shoulder to look at the picture and noticed that he smelled like an old man, and that the high sun made the hairs on his chest cast long shadows on his belly.

Gideon was looking down at the picture of a woman—Shank's "girl." Momentarily the bright day and all it showed to his eyes became a frame to the picture. The tarry pleasant smell of a bit of marline he was twisting in his hands perfumed the moment.

There was a long silence, for the face before Grimes was beautiful. The face of that woman had the seductive patience of a fair-weather sea. It was a smooth-skinned face, deeply shadowed beneath the eyes, which were lighter than the surrounding skin. The hair was heavy, like the flow of oil, and was drawn back from the round cheeks to leave the pale ears showing. The woman wore a round-necked dress with a collar that lay smooth upon it and a sort of coif above her smooth crown. The points of her shoulders were thrown forward slightly so that there was an area above a full, deep bosom which was slightly concave.

"There's the girl," said Shank, and added abruptly, "she's

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a trained nurse. Now," said Shank, "I'll tell ye how I got the money."

So he began, blinking at the wide ocean with his eyes that made only the knight's move.

The new regiment to which, after Gallipoli and towards the end of the war, Shank was shifted, was in a camp close behind the lines in France. In this regiment there was a man who owned a roulette wheel. Daily, this man spread out the marked cloth that was the board and amid an attendant circle he spun the wheel and was the banker—but Shank was the croupier.

And Shank was glad to be croupier, for he felt that he won, himself, and yet at no risk; the banker in turn permitted Shank's offices good-humouredly at first, and then as his game grew larger depended on them. The banker was Sergeant Cooper—a man with a squat frame and a huge U-shaped smile and a nose that plunged down between the upright arms of the U. His smile parted his lips from one corner of his mouth to the other; it looked like a horseshoe turned upright for luck.

One night a soldier came hurrying to the grinning sergeant's group to say that the regiment was ordered forward.

On the following night Shank got himself settled comfortably in a front-line trench. After settling himself he took a walk down the trench to pay a call and to ask a question. He called on a second lieutenant whom he had known before and who had been given a command which included Sergeant Cooper. His question was:

"How's Sergeant Cooper?"

"Oh, he's fine," replied the lieutenant, and Shank retired.

Regularly once a day for four days Shank made this inquiry, and at last on the fourth day the answer he sought was given him.

"I sent Cooper out this morning with a couple of men, to look around, and he didn't come back. They all got separated and Cooper's two men don't know what became of him."

Shank thanked the lieutenant and returned to his place.

He shed no tears for the good sergeant whose wheel had given so much pleasure to so many and so much profit to its owner and who, somewhere in No Man's Land, had encountered a run on the bank.

"I got back then quick to my post," Shank went on, and he waited at his post until full darkness, then crawled over

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the parapet and began, on hands and knees, a search for Sergeant Cooper.

Now and then a star shell went up and caught the thin little man turning over a corpse with his hand for a better look at the face. Instantly he would crouch and be like the dead man himself, using the light, however, for a glance at the dead face, looking eagerly for that horseshoe smile.

Shank told Grimes that it was safer to be in No Man's Land than in a trench, if you knew the shell holes, for there was less shelling there and less sniping.

Sometimes Shank could tell by the smell of a body that it was not that of Sergeant Cooper, for Cooper had not been dead long. Sometimes Shank must have turned over one that still retained life enough to roll a comprehending eye; but he never said this. Perhaps he crept quickly away when this happened, disliking the suspicious glance of these men whose problem was suddenly so far removed from his and who were already cooling in the final chill. He would then have had to come back when such a man had died to make sure that none of them was Cooper. He continued with perseverance his squirming inspection of that dark rat-ridden graveyard for the unburied, returning in the grey of morning.

Thus the man worked to rob the dead. And when Gideon said this Shank turned upon him and said, dropping his "H" as he seldom did: "Well, 'oo are the dead?

"It was the third night," said Shank, "I found him, and in the pocket of his tunic the money, mostly coins."

Shank took the grinning sergeant's identification disc, his money and his wristwatch and warily returned to the home trench. He was not one to believe fortune a friend because fortune had done him a favour...

Shank's voice had stopped and the regular beat of the propeller upon the water now became noticeable It rose, this sound, to take the place of Shank's voice, to fill in the interval as water runs into a depression, levelling it off. The small waves ran out from the wake, upon the surface of the ocean, as upon a hard surface; and the sound of them came regularly as upon a beach. The long, straight wake appeared to have been once a flowing substance, long since congealed, though retaining still the pattern of its boiling. It lay now behind the ship like a fault in the surface of a vast blue earth. Shank pulled a layer of skin-like red paint off the deck and made no further move to speak. The slow strong pulse of calm weather beat everywhere about them.

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While Grimes fidgeted, Shank slept, and between the blue concentric spheres of sky and ocean, three white birds appeared, painted, when they flew high, a yellowed amber by the late afternoon light and reflecting the blue light from the ocean on their bellies when they flew low. The birds looked like tubby cigars, with a stiff unjointed wing shaped like a razor blade attached to each side of the centre of the cigar. With wings as unmoving as if transfixed by the taxidermist's wire, these birds, apparently freed from the laws of gravity, rose and fell in the air. Going nowhere, seeking no food, they were only superficially appropriate—the touch of a landlubber's brush upon the afternoon marine.

The birds passed on ahead of the ship, outdistancing it as did the sun and the lazy waves. One bird, before it disappeared, swept towards the boat and passed over it, casting thus a momentary shadow, like a mask, across Shank's eyes. With the passing of the shadow and the resuming of the glare of the sun upon his face, Shank opened his eyes and looked at once at Gideon. He started, feeling guilty at having been caught thus staring at Shank while he slept.

"I've been thinking—the face of that girl was familiar, Shank. Just let me have another glance at the photo, will you?" Gideon repeated these words to himself, trying to find the casual emphasis.

When at last he spoke the question aloud, Shank said, "What girl?"

"I mean the photo of the trained nurse you showed me."

"You don't know her," said Shank, as if to close the conversation.

But Grimes persisted, "Let me see it at any rate."

"What the hell for?" mumbled Shank; but he unfolded his coat and reached into the inner pocket. Then at last he placed that beautiful victim in Gideon's hand.

Gideon looked but did not dare to gaze too long. Passing the photo back he said, "What's her name?"

"She's Mary Slade," said Shank.

Before Grimes slept that night he dared to ask Shank another question. "Shank," he said, "where is she now, your friend Mary Slade?"

And at this Shank rose out of his bunk, and Grimes saw his head silhouetted against the porthole which showed, a round grey hole in the surrounding darkness. "Say," said Shank, "you're struck on that picture, ain't you?"

Grimes saw, as he examined the silhouette from the shelter

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of his dark bunk, that Shank was right; he was struck on Mary Slade.

At last the silhouette vanished and Grimes saw the round porthole unbroken once more. The straw of Shank's mattress hissed dryly with the movement of his body and Shank's voice said: "She's in Blackwell. A town in the east of England." No more was said that night.

What had taken seed on the fourth day, on the fifth grew rankly, so that the position of Shank as tyrant keeper of the well was a thing established by night. This was natural since Shank and Grimes were day and night together, and had no occupation to keep them from continual consciousness of one another's thoughts; and since there could come no other woman's face to divert these two from the voluptuous contemplation of the face of Mary Slade.

Furthermore, it was necessary for Shank not to displease Grimes too much, for at disembarkation comes another time when the stowaway must have a man to assist him. Someone must carry his duffle ashore, leaving him in hiding aboard until nightfall, when he can walk off unquestioned by the authorities on shore. Once ashore, he can look up his accomplice, get his baggage, and depart about his business. For this task Grimes was the ideal man. And the desire of Grimes' fingers to know exactly the temperature of the opalescent fine-textured skin on Mary Slade's throat was Shank's assurance.

On the sixth day of the voyage the *Iron City* passed in the late afternoon a ship headed back to England. The smokestack of this vessel was a rich weathered pink that shone out even at a great distance. The smoke from the vessel's funnel rose gently upward—for the wind was on her quarter—and then lay in a huge flimsy cloud above the ship. Thoughtful and brooding, as if with a distracted eye upon the ship, the cloud appeared like a mother who patiently slows her pace for the child that bustles by her hand. Other shreds of cloud, fatigued by their defeat at the hands of the sunny day, struggled down the sky and made a white background for the dark brooding smoke.

On one of the *Iron City*'s tarpaulin-covered hatches a stoker sat; his face was pasty, his eyes were darkened about the lashes by coal dust imperfectly removed. He looked like a great actor wearied and resting after the playing of a tragic role. He crooned upon a harmonica softly to the receding day, and noiselessly dusk gathered in the zenith.

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And Gideon, too, sat there on the hatch and watched the ship go slowly back to England. Shank sat beside him.

"That ship," said Shank, "will be steaming up the Mersey in a week, and if ye were aboad her ye'd be in Blackwell the same day."

"I'll go back there, as soon as I get to America," said Grimes.

It was a threat, but Shank laughed. He laughed first silently, with his lower jaw agape, like the swinging jaw of a steam shovel; then he laughed through his nose, noisily, and with his mouth wide open and his stinking breath pouring out between his rotten teeth. Then he banged the tragic actor on the back and asked him did he hear that. The harmonica sputtered, uttered a discord, and then resumed exactly where it left off . . . *save the King.*

Then in the full early night, while Shank beside him dreamed not of the deadly thrust he made at him, Grimes swore to himself to visit Blackwell as soon as he could get back to England. Shank, in silence, enjoyed Grimes' despondent air. He did not know that Gideon's oath made him like a man pushed from a cliff-top; as yet unharmed, he fell through space.

Shank felt a need to play upon Grimes' admiration for Mary and thus to assure himself of Gideon's protection. Every time that Grimes was permitted to see the picture of Mary and this was really often, though never without preliminary resistance, Shank accompanied the revelation of the beautiful face with a new tale of the woman's extraordinary humbleness. These relations, coming with the sight of the picture as they did, filled Grimes with envy and passion. This made Shank exaggerate. Nonetheless, the succession of anecdotes as the days passed built a picture detailed and essentially truthful . . . Mary's strength drew her to Shank's weakness. The more she battled for him and against him, the more she had at stake and the further she was from leaving him. She was like a mother persisting in her love for a vicious child.

During the war the poor women of Blackwell had been organised to do a share in the war work. They knitted and rolled bandages; and Mary, whose hands were quick, soon began to be noticed. A hospital was started in the neighbourhood, and Mary's capabilities soon drew her out of her natural sphere and into another. Mary became a trained nurse. As a nurse Mary was distinguished by her calm strength. She

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tended her patients placidly, disregarding their complaints, her mind fixed only on the signs of their recovery.

The war ended. Mary Slade returned to Blackwell; and when Shank returned also, all her natural affection and all her newly-acquired gift for watching over the unreasonable, flowed out upon him. In this nerve-racking atmosphere of endless patience Shank soon grew restless again.

There was still one other chapter in the six-day epic of Shank's leechdom. It was apparently almost a final scene in that part of Shank's life which preceded his brief acquaintance with Grimes. The effect of its telling upon Gideon's mind was subtle and final. It grew into his mind during the next day of the voyage like roots into soft earth, laying a fine fatal tendril on every particle. For it showed to Grimes how the fear of dying hung over Shank, excluding consideration for the world. It made Grimes feel strong—he seemed to hold a weapon built and weighted to his hand . . .

During the summer following the peace, Shank was finally mustered out of France and crossed the Channel on his way to Blackwell. He found, among the troops that accompanied him, another man who was also going to Blackwell. With this man Shank made friends. They had drunk many drinks together by the time Blackwell was reached and Shank had shown his friend the picture of Mary. Meanwhile Shank had thought of a joke with which to celebrate his homecoming.

"Go to her house and tell her I'm dead," said Shank.

Shank's friend, a handsome man, impressed by Mary's beauty and feeling that the embrace of a handsome man is often a quick road away from grief for the death of a runt, consented—already feeling the soft skin of Mary on his lips.

The handsome man went to the house where Mary lived and spoke his piece, and Mary wept at the news and screamed under his kisses and he fled.

Such was Shank's joke—and Shank waited at a nearby saloon to hear the outcome. His friend, of course, never bothered to report and Shank, after waiting and drinking, set out for Mary's house himself. The woman who came to the door in answer to Shank's ring said that Mary had left the house. Shank knew Blackwell and knew where she would have gone. Shank was pretty drunk but he kept walking. Just outside the town the road crossed a brook, and at its crossing there was a break in the hedge that bordered the road and a footpath ran through it along the side of the brook.

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The path ended where the brook crossed another road, a mile farther along its course. Here Shank and Mary had walked in the early days of Shank's courting.

Unsteadily then, Shank walked down this path in search of his beautiful Mary. He found her remembering in torture the kisses of the handsome man, and wondering in yet greater pain if the terrible story he had told her was true.

Shank's snuffling laugh announced to Mary his return from death, for the sight of Mary's grief was funny to him. Shaking with laughter he half fell, half willingly sat down in the coarse strong-growing grass at the brook's edge. Mary, seeing him, ran to him, crouched beside him pressing her wet face upon his in joy. Shank laughed on, and between drunken giggles explained his joke. Mary was not a woman to spank a long-lost child because he had run away. She was glad of Shank's return and went on kissing him. Under her kisses his gloating suddenly turned from mirth to heat.

The soft upper edge of Mary's breast might just have showed at the pointed neck of her dress—so Grimes thought—where its smooth arch sprang from her chest. It might have looked in the half light of the long twilight a grey-cream colour, soft and giving elusively under the touch as if the skin actually floated upon a smooth rich liquid. Shank's breath, smelling of stale beer, warmed Mary's neck; perhaps she saw in his face more human emotion than she had seen for many years.

Thus the picture was before Grimes' eyes when Shank paused to grab the shoulder of the intent listener, startling him so that he shivered. "Wot 'appened then? 'Ere's wot 'appened—a damn rabbit, his guts a-swim with fear, scrambled clean over the two of us"—as intent upon its separate terror as Shank upon the soft throat of Mary. But here something had laid hold of Mary. Suddenly, the smell of decaying vegetation in the brook bed, the reasonless cancerous profusion of growth 'all about her, smothered for a moment the intentness of her love of Shank. She stopped him in mid-caress.

While he paused, the rabbit, still near, began to scream; the enemy that had invisibly pursued had now caught up. The rabbit gave forth a series of cries each less strong, a significant diminuendo, without emotion, a purely mechanical announcement that that which was alive understood that it was losing in agony all the world of created things. The mad desire to go on living, the great condition of all life, was in the presence of Mary and Shank, undergoing the final chastening which it

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was born to meet, the ultimate agony which dwarfs all joy. Shank felt Mary's body stiffen and relax as if the outcry were her own, and Shank's hand, like a scaled lizard, withdrew, cringing, from that dim and oddly cool chamber between Mary's breasts where it had crept.

Between that time and the time of his seeking out the *Iron City,* Shank did not again make love to Mary Slade. Death had waggled a finger at him. He was impressed by his bad luck. Perhaps he had hoped the *Iron City* would wall it out, but it had walled it in. Grimes, too, feared it and felt himself shaken by a strange anticipatory tremble, like a bride before her lover, but the embrace that now encircled him was sinister and invisible.

"Does Mary know why you have gone or where?" asked Grimes.

"I'll write," said Shank, "when I'm well ready."

There were two things only which served to make one day different from the next aboard the *Iron City.* The weather and the photograph of Mary Slade. The rotation of stew and hash was as monotonous and as inevitable as the turn of the ship's propeller. The rotation of distant officers upon the bridge was the same. One had a beard, one had a moustache, one was clean-shaven. These faces appeared against the sky in a succession as imperturbable as the alternation of sun and moon against the same sky, and the faces seemed, if anything, more distant. Sun and moon and officers and hash all moved like figures on an elaborate clock to the rhythmic, melodious, distant sound of the ship's bells.

But the weather and the photograph were full of change. They maintained an interrelationship of mood, an irrelevant coquettishness. They smiled, then sneered; they played tricks with time, they spun the moon in its orbit at will; they rang the ship's bells and toyed with the succession of beards and moustaches. Gideon was bound by their spell day and night. He was alone with the *Iron City* surrounded by hallucinations; he sailed in an empty sea.

By the eighth day Mary was flesh and blood for Grimes and he had set up about her picture all those fetishes of love that men set up about the moods of real women.

It was a cruel tyranny. He tried to think of a way by which he might break it. In the first place he might steal the photograph. When Shank discovered its absence, he would become infuriated—for he would thus lose a hostage for his security, and the implement with which, in this dull interval, he tortured

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Grimes. He would realise just where his picture had gone and Grimes would not dare sleep in a room with a man thus enraged, who was, moreover, in possession of a bag of murderous tackler's tools—mechanic's hammers nicely weighted, punches, and the like. If he dared not sleep with Shank after the theft, so Grimes reasoned, he should have to get rid of him, and this he might do by hastily informing the ship's officers of the presence of a stowaway aboard the ship. This scheme would leave Grimes quit of Shank and in possession of the photograph.

In the darkness of the eighth night—stimulated by the wheezing of the unconscious Shank—Grimes plotted on. A stowaway is put in the brig and he goes back with the ship to his native port. Shank would go back to England and very likely, after a short jail term, back to Mary. Grimes, without money, having to work his passage back, could hardly get there before Shank. It would not do to expose Shank.

Here the sleeping Shank paused in his wheezing to moisten his lips, and for Gideon from this thought there arose another anxiety. Suppose Shank were to lose the photograph? He would be quite as sure that Grimes had taken it as if he really had, and Grimes would be in the same danger of violence.

On the ninth day of the voyage a new piece of information was thrust at Gideon. The finger of God appeared and pointed to it.

Early in the ninth night Shank and Grimes stood on the fo'c's'lehead. The wind was behind the ship so that it was comfortable to be in the bow. Two figures moved silently on the bridge. A third man was tinkering with the searchlight on the bridge; it went on and off at rare intervals; a lantern was near him to light his work.

There were only two topics of conversation between Grimes and Shank now. There was the problem of getting Shank ashore, and there was Mary Slade.

"Mary's a fine big woman," said Shank. He drew out his wallet. "If the searchlight comes on again ye might have a look." Grimes tried in the half darkness to prepare his eyes to take advantage of every moment of light by filling them in advance with the image of the photograph so that no time should be wasted in recognition of details already sufficiently impressed on his mental eye. Thus his eye was fixed upon Shank's hands that held his wallet and the photograph. Many

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moments passed but the light was not turned on. After a while it went on and shone out over the water, throwing only a reflected greyness upon the photograph.

Shank and Grimes waited, but at last Shank grew tired and began to put it back in its place. As he was doing this, and while Gideon's eyes still stared at his hands, a rod of light leapt into the air. It did not progress from the searchlight and illuminate Shank's hands. It was dropped into place whole; one end rested in the socket of the searchlight on the bridge, the other rested on the wallet in Shank's hands and slipped a tributary beam into every crevice and pocket in it. The finger of light pointed into the long pocket at the back of the wallet. There, deep in the bowels of the greasy wallet, ephemeral, perishable, Grimes perceived two notes of the Bank of England. The bar of light vanished, not sucked in like a lizard's tongue, but lifted out of place whole and instantaneously and put down somewhere else out of sight. Grimes had not fixed his anxious gaze upon Mary's face, but what had he seen?

In the darkness that follows blinding light and that slowly returns again to the normal grey, like blood returning to a frightened face, Grimes saw that Shank's eyes were fixed upon his and that they asked him that same question.

Grimes had not envisaged the winnings of Sergeant Cooper in the form of two bank notes in Shank's pocket. He had supposed the money hidden or in a bank. Now it appeared to be within reach of his hand. That money, could he procure it, would see him back to England at once.

After an interval Shank went below, but Grimes remained where he was. Smoke, black and angry, was pushed out of the funnel and blown forward above him, darkening the night. The many sounds of the travelling ship made in his ear a monotonous whisper, a woven harlequin pattern of sound unheard. An ocean of jet a-sparkle with highlights stood before his eyes unseen. Eyes and ears turned inwards and fixed themselves upon one thought. When Grimes took the photograph from Shank, he must also take the money.

He saw himself upon the bridge telling the two men about the stowaway. He saw an officer asking him why he had not reported this sooner; he heard Shank's voice saying that he had only done it now because he had taken Shank's money; Grimes saw himself locked with Shank below decks. While Shank had a voice, a memory, while Shank was on the ship, Grimes would not be safe . . .

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Then, upon that instant, Shank must have no voice, no memory.

He must leave the ship.

From every angle both in space and time, Gideon saw a long line of circumstances converging with a fitness born of fatality upon the deed of murder. No-one knew that Shank was aboard the *Iron City*. A day or so before the vessel's arrival in harbour it was necessary that Shank disappear so that, when the final roundup came, he would be well hidden, waiting for evening to enable him to slip off the ship unseen. When Shank was no longer on the ship, Grimes would only have to say to his companions, who knew Shank was a stowaway, that Shank had begun his term of hiding. Grimes then would walk off the vessel when it made port with Shank's duffle as already arranged, and who was to know that Shank, who had been last seen in Blackwell, had met death upon the Grand Banks of Newfoundland?

The heavy bag of tools, the mechanic's hammer, now seemed to Gideon as providential as the revelation of the money and the chance of having come to know the photograph.

With this thought of violence tightening its unfamiliar grip upon him, Gideon waited upon the bow beneath the heavy train of smoke that went into the west. Its mass concealed him, its hot breath warmed him. He wanted to go beneath it, towards the shore. He felt that the smoke would guide him and conceal him from the stars. He saw himself upon a bicycle outdistancing the ship, riding upon the sea with Shank already done to death in stealth.

He climbed down the iron stairway to the fo'c's'le deck. At the foot of it was the doorway to that four-bunk cabin which Shank and he had so successfully held against their companions. The round brass ring that was a doorknob, stared at him as soon as he had stepped off the last step; he laid hand upon it; he stepped over the high sill and closed the door behind him.

Into the deeper blackness of the cabin the greyer light of the open night flowed from the port over Shank's bunk and lit with a faint austere light the head that Gideon hoped to crush, forty-eight hours hence; the eyes, their uneven flicker of deceit now vanished, moved idly beneath their lids. The faithful, forward motion of the ship gave peace. Shank's face wore the composed yet faintly-drawn expression of a death mask. Below the calm-sharpened face Gideon saw, as his eyes became accustomed to yet deeper shades of night, protruding

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from the bunk beneath Shank's, the handle of his mechanic's hammer.

Grimes undressed silently so as not to wake Shank. He climbed into his bunk. He did not sleep. Hour upon hour his muscles twitched with the effort of wielding that hammer. He caught it with both hands and swung it above his head, but found he had swung it too freely and the metal girder above Shank's bunk rang where the blow fell. He realised that he could not strike as he would drive a spike with a sledge. He struck again, with a more circumspect swing; the blow fell strong upon the face of Shank, but the high side of the bunk was struck by the handle of his weapon at the same time that its head struck the sleeping face; the force of the blow was broken, it was not fatal, it did not even stun. Gideon wiped the slate clean again, and the next time he stood upon the lower bunk giving himself thus height from which to strike. His stroke this time was very cramped but the hammer was heavy, it shattered the skull like cardboard. It caught inside the hole it had made and could not easily be withdrawn. Gideon did not have the remotest idea how much force a skull would resist, nor did he know how it would resist. Was it like a hen's egg, he wondered, or like a turtle's egg? A last time he rehearsed the blow, and this time he used the flat of the hammer and was successful. Would there be blood, he wondered? Was it a sure way to kill a man?

The ship travelled methodically on. It carried Shank and Gideon; and it carried all about Gideon a thousand other Shanks all variously mutilated and resisting his hammer. The room was crowded with their forms, they overlapped. There was one form with many heads; not one was whole. Gideon suffered the tortures of one who repents a crime. Yet he had not as yet committed any crime and certainly did not regret it. In the light of morning he resolved against the business and then slept.

Grimes opened his eyes, puffed with short hours of stuffy sleep. He knew at once that his life had become an unpleasant business. He looked forward to the day with dread and to all days. He sought in his mind for the reason and found at once the feeling of the murder of Shank. Hastily following down the thoughts of the passed day, to overtake the present, he found his mind too slow for his anxiety. He rose out of his bed and hastily and fearfully looked into Shank's bunk. Shank lay there asleep. Grimes was at once overjoyed and disappointed: the situation was unchanged.

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He had nothing to fear today that he did not have to fear yesterday; he had no new hope today. Then, in the same moment, he remembered the outcome of the night's deliberations—he had decided not to kill Shank.

He was free.

From the breakfast of sluggish gruel, stiffened bread, dusty butter, brightened only by the sunny light of marmalade, the untouchables on the tenth day arose and went on deck. The sun drew them up as it drew the light mists that lay here and there upon the ocean, like clouds dozing.

Grimes chose the forward end of the ship. He paced back and forth on the windward side of the deck and slowly he felt purged of the night. For this tenth day was lively. In its light all things moved lightly, briskly—waves, clouds, sun, and ship. The officer on the bridge moved quickly. He minced as if he walked a treadmill which supplied the power for the sprightly motion of the world around him. There in the ship's bow, Shank found Grimes, and crept away again frightened by his fierce silence.

Grimes stood staring at the flat sea as it came towards the ship. The boat was stationary, only the sea moved. Someone behind drew the huge flat sheet of water towards the vessel. The sheet was torn asunder in its exact centre by the bow of the stationary boat. The material parted with a faint hiss. The dark scar of those parted edges showed behind the ship as far as the eye could see. Grimes watched the roll come towards him from the west. The lunch hour came and passed, he did not go below. The sea grew flatter. The cloth ran from the bolt smoothly and still more smoothly. The sun leapt with one exuberant bound into the zenith and through the bright afternoon. There it stood as still as if Grimes were a Joshua, and while it stood there and while the sea grew calm it waned, it paled. It was like a last ember in the grate at which you warm your hands. It died in mid-leap, and before the day had reached maturity it had dwindled into a premature and waxen twilight.

Then at last, as the day fainted and night stood close, Grimes perceived the end of the bolt on which the smooth ocean was wound, the loom from which it came. For all about there now appeared wisps of mist, string-like shreds of vapour rising from the taut silken surface. And while Grimes watched, the ship was swallowed in the machinery of the loom. It plunged into a wall of fog.

Grimes now found himself in a new, cramped world, a world

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hardly bigger than the ship itself, and far from other worlds. Heralding this accomplished passage out of the world that Grimes knew, came an enormous sound. It filled the fog-bound sphere in which the ship was cased. This sound flowed alike between the particles of air and the particles of Gideon's body. It was as loud in his stomach as in the air above his head. It drew his knees towards his chin in a convulsion of fear. Up on the bridge the officer with a moustache had drawn down the wire that ran up the fog horn upon the funnel. Summoned by that trumpet of doom Gideon went to his cabin, scarce knowing whether he was judge or judged and fearing to be either.

He was too late for supper. He could only crawl shivering between his blankets; and his belly, made savage with hunger, paced within him like a caged cat, and at two-minute intervals throughout the night his whole body was dissolved in sound.

At every blast throughout the unrelenting night, Gideon's eyes leapt open. Morning came again, the eleventh morning, and as the sun rose higher the fog withdrew, not altogether but to a good distance—a besieging army which takes counsel after an unexpected rebuff. The fog horn ceased its braying—the wind had not risen since it had dropped twenty hours before. There was no sound of waves rebounding from iron flanks, no grunting of strained bolts; the ship moved stealthily. Relieved from the tension produced by the blasts of the horn which seemed to demand an accounting of him, Gideon fell asleep.

The morning passed. After lunch, feeling more cheerful, Grimes returned on deck with Shank. The sun was losing its strength, the boat still skated upon a stricken sea. Then the sun vanished altogether and the world, bounded by fog, shrank. With this new contraction of the cage surrounding Grimes and Shank, announcing their approach to a fog-bound Newfoundland, announcing the beginning of the end of the voyage, the separation of Grimes from Shank and consequently the separation of Grimes from the picture of Mary, came a scream from the fog horn, and Grimes jumped the more because this time he saw the sound was coming, but could not tune his ears to its loudness. He winced before it as if it were a cry for help that called him into danger. In two minutes the scream came again and yet again, the fog came closer and the afternoon crept on, two minutes at a time.

A half hour later there came out of the fog another sign of the approaching end of the voyage. Four gulls, signifying

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anew the nearness of land, appeared in the ship's wake. Two of the birds cackled malevolently, one wailed melodiously and pityingly, and one made a sound that was like the voice of a woman. This voice, low, smooth and rich, was raised in speech, but before it had time to articulate it halted, as if embarrassed by emotion. Unmoved, however, by threat or tears the ship slid slowly forward and the afternoon drew to a close.

After supper, with the world about the *Iron City* even more constricted by darkness that arrived to reinforce the fog, Grimes went to the wheelhouse. Here also came Shank. They leaned upon the ship's rail together. The voices of the gulls spoke to them of the end of the strange voyage watched over by the beauty of Mary Slade.

"Shank," said Grimes, finally, "let's have a look at Mary before it's too dark."

Shank reached into his inner pocket and brought out his wallet.

He held it in his hand.

Grimes waited, and under the pressure of Shank's delay he added another plea. "Give me the picture," he said. "You'll never give happiness more easily."

"I can give it easier to Mary," said Shank, but he drew from the wallet the picture—he was about to do as Grimes asked.

Holding the small white square between his hands, his elbows on the rail, and hands above the wake of the ship, his deliberations produced the effect of a pause. During this pause, while Grimes was putting forth a hand to receive from Shank the photograph, Shank let slip the picture of Mary just before Gideon's fingers could close upon it. While the face of Mary was still visible to Gideon, the falling photograph was far beyond his reach, as irrevocably removed as are the living from the dead.

Mary was gone.

With her went Grimes' tolerance of Shank. He began to get angry.

Shank laughed at the accident. He, in that moment, reached the peak of his power over Grimes. Even if some breath of wind had played the final trick that Shank dared not play, yet now he could laugh and appear as if he had permitted the accident.

Grimes was helpless. "God damn you, Shank," he said. "You bastard." He sought for some supreme blasphemy,

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but there was none; only the daily oaths came to his tongue.

Shank savoured the impotent insults; they rolled down his scraggy throat as easily as they shot up from Grimes'.

Grimes rattled the loose ship's rail in his hand. He stamped his foot. Then, suddenly, a great feeling of freedom rolled over him; there was now no reason to preserve the forms of friendship with Shank. He had tolerated Shank's nauseous personality in order that he might be permitted to look at the picture of Mary. What reason was there for Grimes to control his dislike now? And Shank's laughs were echoed by Grimes' own. Shank stopped in surprise. Grimes, watching, grew cold and deliberate.

"You think you've got Mary, Shank," he said. "Why do you think I've asked questions about her? Why do I know her address and where she works? Because I'm going back to Blackwell to get her. I'm going to have her now, not you. What's more, you're going to be damn polite the rest of this voyage or I'll tell an officer you're a stowaway and you'll be starved below decks, handcuffed so you can't brush off the rats. Damn you, Shank."

Shank might have tried to hit Gideon then; but Grimes turned and left him.

The fog horn split the silence. Its two-minute interval had just bracketed the scene.

It hurried Gideon on his way.

The fog about the ship shut out sound and sight and air and held in the demon who yelled in the cabin. Grimes slept; awoke and perceived that not yet had Shank come to bed. Why in hell was he up so late? Was he out behind the wheelhouse, terrified by threats and wondering how he could escape exposure?

One more night and the *Iron City* would raise Highland Light; the fog horn bellowed—there might be fishing schooners near.

What was Shank thinking? Gideon asked himself. Then he saw. "Where's my buddy, did ye ask?" Shank would say to the fo'c's'le cook; "e's going to hide out this last day. Let me get his landing card. The officers don't know one of us for another. I'll get ashore, then he'll have his passport, says he can manage all right." It wasn't a very good idea, but who would think about it, and where would Gideon be? Gideon asked in the dark cabin and Gideon answered. He would be overboard with the hammer thrown after, gone the way he had thought of sending Shank. Shank would have his

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papers, passport and all. It was simple; that was what Shank was thinking. He, who had crawled about in the cold blood of dead men, would not fumble the doing. He simply waited for Gideon to go to sleep.

I must not sleep, thought Gideon.

He turned on the light to help him stay awake. He lay and blinked at the dull light. Now the blaring fog horn became a lullaby. When it blew, its loudness suspended the action of Gideon's senses and held his eyes closed. They flew open again as soon as the sound ceased, to tell him if Shank had come into the room. There was a perceptible time between the moment at which Gideon's eyes flew open and the succeeding temporary allaying of his fears. During this moment he could visualise the form of Shank; head and shoulders leaning over his bunk, hammer poised flat side towards his head. Feverishly Gideon's brain would hasten to compare this anticipated image with what his eyes actually saw. When he found that they did not coincide, his terror was allayed for two minutes more, but when his eyes closed again the hammer rose as before and his scalp crawled upon his skull, awaiting the shock. He rubbed the place.

Then he dozed and dreamed.

He dreamed that he opened his eyes, that he hastened to compare as always the two images, the one that he feared with the one that he actually beheld, and that he found to his utter terror that they exactly coincided. This time with certainty, and in spite of the fact that his eyes were surely open, he still beheld the thin wrist, the bony hand with fingers whitened by the strength of the grip upon the handle of the heavy hammer. He tried to grab the wrist, to shout. He writhed in his bunk in a death agony and then he overcame the force that held shut his eyes. The deafening horn which held him asleep suddenly ceased, his eyelids flew up; and waking, he beheld neither the familiar sight of the iron girder above his bunk nor the anticipated grim face and upraised hammer. He beheld nothing. The room was dark. The light had been turned out.

Was Shank there above him? He did not know. He rose up. He could see only the round porthole, dimly grey. He got out of his bunk and reached into the bunk below Shank's to see if the hammer was there. He felt the handle; why had he not thought to possess himself of it before? Next, he stood upon the edge of the lower bunk and looked into Shank's bunk to see if he were there. He was there, and in

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the faint light from the porthole his eyes showed dark in the lighter tone of his face. They were open. He must be seeing Gideon leaning over him with the hammer in his hand. He would kill Gideon. Gideon must strike while sleep still stifled Shank's mind, if not his sight.

Gideon brought down the hammer flat side foremost, swinging short from his elbow to avoid the girder. Shank tried to shout; sleep still held him for one split instant more. The flat side of the hammer struck the head. It was not like a hen's egg; it was not like a turtle's egg; it was like an apple inside a sock.

The fog horn blew again. It was two minutes since Gideon had got out of his bunk.

Gideon shuddered and got hold of one of his blankets. Shank too shuddered, as if the idea of death were repugnant to him. Gideon did not dare to touch Shank's heart to see if he were dead; instead he put his heavy blanket over Shank's head so that if he should not be dead and should groan the sound would be muffled. Then Gideon dressed, and went to the galley.

This part was simple and Gideon was quick, for he had thought it out before. In the galley was a sackful of potato peelings and the galley was empty. Gideon took the sack to his cabin quickly lest Shank should be alive. Shank had not moved.

He emptied the sack on the floor of the cabin.

Then he climbed laboriously into the top bunk and, straddling the warm form of Shank, which, for all he knew, might still be alive, he shudderingly pulled the blanket from Shank's head and all in one motion hurled it to the floor among the potato peelings. The head was still and Gideon saw that it was queerly shaped. He pulled the sack hastily over it, then down to the waist of the limp little man.

In the end, after lifting the whole unwieldy burden to the floor, he was able to shake the whole of the man, Shank, in an inverted squat-down into the sack. He tried not to jounce the crushed head too hard upon the floor in doing this. Once, he waited for the blare of the fog horn to conceal the sound of his operation. When the little man was in the sack, Gideon shoved his tool kit in after him, tying it to one ankle. He got the burden on to his shoulder by resting it on an upper bunk, paused, adjusting the weight, and it seemed to him that the pulse of the ship's engine went slower. The world became still more quiet; between the blasts of the fog

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horn there was no sound in the world but the expiring distant beat of the ship's engine.

Gideon opened the door of the cabin and peered out as well as he could with that awkward, hundred-odd pounds upon his shoulder. He saw no-one, once out of his room he was all right or almost. He might have been working late for the cook and now be carrying the week's collection of potato peeling to the door in the ship's side to throw it out. He staggered out upon the darkened underdeck.

The concrete floor was slippery with the dampness of the fog. Bent as Shank had been that first day in Liverpool when he came down the dock with his duffle-bag, Gideon walked uncertainly aft. Before he had taken two steps the dying rhythm of the ship's engine ceased altogether. Silence fell upon the world. Gideon, too, felt forced to stop, his bundle settled upon his shoulder as if making itself comfortable. Now creeping up behind Gideon came that deadly brazen shout. The bridge again! Gideon started aft in the dead ship with a dead burden nestling to him and there came to him now a faint answering bellow, as if spectators were assembling for the burial of Shank at sea.

Gideon came to the door in the side of the ship. The whole unrippling ocean waited to hear the sound of Shank's plunge. He lowered the sack to the deck and waited for the salute from the bridge which would conceal the sound of the splash. In the sluggish sea the ship was losing way. Across the water came the answering bleat. He knew that the call of the *Iron City* would follow soon. He got ready. "Get set," it said to him and GO cried the signal from the bridge.

Forward and outward fell the sack. Gideon leaned over and grasped the two lower corners and whipped back his body. That shrivelled parasite, Grimes' strange companion, Shank, fell free of the sack, unsheltered by any shroud, into the ocean which quivered now beneath the *Iron City*'s brazen blast. As Shank struck the water it seemed to Gideon to fall away beneath, forming momentarily a smooth bowl-like cradle for the huddled form, a cradle festooned about its edges with a pale fire of phosphorescence. Then the water grew calm above the spot where Shank had fallen. He sank slowly, dragged down by the feet to which Gideon had tied the kit of tools. The face looked up and Gideon could see it; for phosphorescent bubbles issued from the nose and mouth and escaped from the hair and drew in livid light the outline of a bodiless, eyeless face.

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While Gideon looked down thus and Shank looked up, there came, winding like a garter snake through tall grass, a gigantic serpent of light, a curious fish which left behind it a trail of phosphorescence and was drawn by this sudden commotion in the sea. For one final instant the upturned face seemed like the head of this serpentine body, like the fabulous serpent of the garden of Eden, human-headed; then all was lost in a knot of fiery coils which fell shining into a hell of velvet in the shadow of the ship.

Gideon straightened his aching back and turned about. Little Shank was gone like big Australia, a cockroach in a mug of beer.

In the end it was light. Grimes got himself on deck. He rose, still stupid with the shock of murder, out of the darkness and stench of the ship, out of the cabin where the smell of Shank's living body still hung, into the opalescent misty morning.

The fog had retreated somewhat and the fog horn no longer blew.

He went to the rail and looked upon the sea. No wind stirred it; yet everywhere there was life. As far as he could see, spread out at geometrically even intervals like *fleur-de-lis* on a wall-paper, there were small black and white birds. They could not rise off the water because the day was still. They rested each in its appointed place upon the endless pewter plane and waited for the wind. As the ship moved upon this strange sea, the birds became frightened by its approach and flapped their short strong wings vainly. Around each bird then ripples arose, widening evenly, slowly, until the graceful circles became tangent to one another. The *Iron City* lay upon a sheet of ancient silver chased with an inscrutable design.

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◆ Lovell Thompson is an American whose powerful prose has often been compared with that of Joseph Conrad. But it wasn't until he wrote *Iron City* — which reappeared in a recently-published anthology of best American stories — that he received literary recognition. After graduating from Harvard he went into publishing — he's an executive with a Boston company — but he carefully reserves his evenings and weekends for writing

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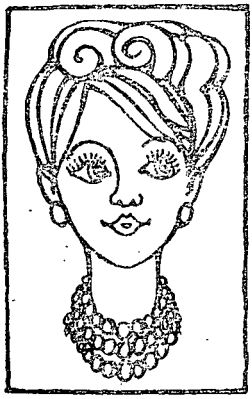
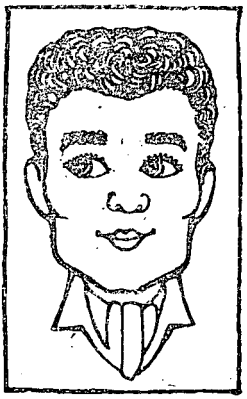


Drink to me only

by JOHN LENNON



A new writer and an Argosy discovery — but not to be confused with the famous Beatle of the same name—writes a riotous story of Irish wit tinged with a bit of blarney

TWO heads are better than one, except when you've got a hangover. That's what I always think when I remember Janzee O'Dell. She came over from America to the land of her forefathers not long ago.

There she was with the figure of an angel, hair the colour of yellow silk, the bluest eyes outside of a doll's shop and twenty million dollars. Yet nobody begrudged her any of it. Well, mebbe the drunks did, for she was that anti-booze she wouldn't even take a lick of sherry trifle.

She came to Ireland, as true as I'm standing, to stop people drinking. Can you believe it? You had to like her for the very cheek of it.

With her was no beefy bodyguard or pack of hounds, but a certain Aunt Clarissa. One hundred-and-fifty pounds of knobbly bone with enough fuzz on her chin to stuff a cushion and a voice that would frighten the police.

So there was the two of them on this anti-drink crusade. Honest to God, you'd think they could have found an easier way of passing the time. The question of drink has never been an Irishman's problem. Only the question of getting it.

Nevertheless and notwithstanding, what with Janzee's beauty, brains and money and Aunt Clarrie's left hook they seemed to have everything short of hatchets.

They never boasted another relative in the world between

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them. Big Jim O'Dell, Janzee's father, had made a mint of money out of Texas oil in the old days. I heard tell he could smell oil with one nostril and liquor with the other. To give you the truth of the matter he was cursed with two faults; a permanent thirst and an absent mind. Which no doubt is why he forgetfully drowned himself one day in a barrel of bourbon—God rest his soul. Janzee's mother had hastened to the peace of an early grave years before.

When you think that Janzee was only eight years old when she found her father in the barrel you couldn't wonder that she wasn't too keen on drink.

Anyway, there they were, and the funniest thing of all was the first meeting they were asked to in Dublin. Dear knows how it happened, but instead of being a dry affair the whole place was swimming. I ought to know—I was there.

You'll need no telling that the two women didn't like this at all, considering it a hand-picked, made-to-measure insult. They stayed just long enough to tip up the bar and smash out the lights and they were gone. But it was long enough for them to be seen all right. And to be seen by one man in particular, my boss-man, Mike Duffy.

He took one look at Janzee, stopped dead in his tracks, and never touched another drink for eight minutes. And if you think there's nothing in that let me tell you he used to mash his murphies with whiskey and he'd drink warm beer sitting by himself in the middle of a dark room. On top of that he was the biggest brewer in these parts.

I'd been working for Mike ever since he took over the business from his father. I was his general manager and right hand.

I was also his left hand and both legs when he was well loaded.

He was a good boss, and a nicer lad never trod leather. Black curly hair that had every female itching to run her wedding finger through it: grey eyes that were merry and bright when they weren't bloodshot, and the sort of charm that could sell life insurance to a Chinese coolie.

But he stood no chance, and I told him so. "The only time she'll get within ten feet of you," I said, "is if she thinks you're ready for the pledge—God forbid."

"Ah, you're as weak upstairs as a council house," he said. "Sure, isn't she human?"

"She'll have nothing to do with a drinker," I said, "and a brewer to boot."

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"That," said Mike, "is only because she has nothing else to think about. I'll alter that."

"And what about that old goat with her?" I asked. "Get too close to her precious niece and she'll knock you bow-legged."

"You can take care of her. Now shut your head and start earning that money you take off me every month. I want to call on Janzee."

So that's how we both came to be standing inside a room fit for a wake two days later.

Janzee had a suite on the top floor of the best hotel in town and getting up there was a small safari.

Aunt Clarrie was there right enough, hovering around Janzee like an old tom round a pot of cream. Janzee was over by a big fireplace, standing knee-deep in carpet and wearing some kind of black satin pyjama-suit. Her hair was plaited into a couple of gold ropes that hung down her back. B'God she was a stopper all right.

"I know who you are Mr. Duffy, and we meet as natural enemies," she said straightaway, and her voice was like iced silver.

"You're wrong," said Mike, jumping in with both feet, "and I'm happy to tell you so."

"Just what exactly did you want from me?" she asked, not moving an inch.

"I'll give you no honey and no hypocrisy. I've only seen you once before and I knew it then. You're the only woman I ever wanted to end my days with. And that's the truth."

Aunt Clarrie gave a short cackle. "Cut!" she said in a voice like splintered glass. "Mister, you'd get an Oscar for that in Hollywood."

I had a feeling she wasn't for him.

Janzee took Mike's words as though she got a proposal every day of her life, which she probably did.

"I detest drink," she said in a right royal voice, "and you make it. I don't even wish to talk to you."

"Prejudice," said Mike, as cocky as a sparrow on a twig. "You run your campaign on money from oil—am I not right? And from oil comes petrol. Shall I tell you how many deaths are caused through petrol?"

"Your arguments are entirely specious," she said. That floored the pair of us for a minute. "Drink causes misery, illness and squalor. And what's more," she added, "I have

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no doubt you are a slave to the disgusting habit yourself."

"Ah, I could give up liquor any time I wanted to," said Mike.

"—with the help of a drink or two," I put in, just for a laugh. Aunt Clarrie turned a glinty eye on me.

"I see," she said, looking back at Mike, "you carry your barman with you."

"With all due respect, ma'am," I said, feeling hot behind the ears, "I'll crack your skull if you refer to me as a barman."

"Now listen—gentlemen," said Janzee and her voice only just gave us the benefit of the doubt, "you are in a filthy business and I shall do my best to smash it. That is all I have to say."

"Cromwellian!" bawled Mike. "If the likes of you had your way there'd never be a glass of anything to warm the heart at Christmas—or to toast a bride. And at a terrible time like bereavement I've no doubt you'd expect the mourners to moisten parched throats with their own tears!" He always got a touch of the Killarneys when he was excited.

Aunt Clarrie ambled forward two paces. "How would you like," she said, eyeing the open window, "to make it downstairs without the elevator?"

"Don't bother, Aunt Clarrie." Janzee's voice was a shade too calm. "They are just leaving." And she picked a ten-guinea vase from the mantelpiece and bounced it off Mike's head in one go.

Mike ducked behind the sofa—just before me. Aunt Clarrie drew herself up like John L. Sullivan and Janzee started collecting more *bric-à-brac*.

"Didn't I tell you?" I said in Mike's ear.

"Ah, she's interested!" he yelled as a Dresden china shepherdess-and-dog near took the top of his head off.

We got out just in time to avoid a massed charge and went home.

Mike was still jubilant.

"Don't you see, if she'd not been interested she'd have had us shown out."

"Will you talk sense?" I said. But the poor man was still light-headed.

"It's true. Sure, I don't expect an old fool like you to understand, but when a woman throws something at you she has a feeling."

"Judging by her aim she must be mad for you."

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Well, the next three weeks were the funniest ever I spent. Sometimes I wouldn't see him for days on end, then he'd turn up grinning like a Kilkenny cat. And never on a bender mind you, I could tell that from his face.

I never seen him looking better. He looked so good it had me worried. In the meantime he was writing to Janzee with all the cheek in the world. More than that, he was getting answers. Every now and then he'd show me just the heading on her notes. They started stone-cold at *Mr. Duffy*, warmed up to *Dear Mr. Duffy*, started to singe at *Dear Mike*, and burst into flames with *Mike Darling*. And all this while she was blasting away at everything in sight over two per cent proof.

I don't know where or when exactly, but it looked as though he was ducking under Aunt Clarrie's guard. Don't ask me how he did it, but of course he was seeing Janzee.

Then one day he called me into his office.

"Here's what I want you to do," he said, sinking a double Irish without blinking. "Write her a letter."

"Me? In God's name what will that do?"

"It'll do all the good in the world. Now get your nose out of that glass and listen. I want you to write her a little note telling her how sorry you are for breaking all those lovely ornaments."

"But that was weeks ago—"

"Tell her I haven't been the same man ever since I first saw her. That I've had a strangeness come over me."

"I'll tell her that all right."

"Then tell her you feel in your bones I'm about to do something dramatic. And that you haven't seen me—I've been missing several days."

"Now that's a downright lie."

"It is not. I'm leaving now and you'll not see me for a week."

"I suppose it's no use me asking—"

"You're quick off the mark today; it is not."

"I give up," I said. "I don't see what you're hoping to gain. She hates drink, you love drink. It's a simple straightforward mix-up."

"Ah, you've got the eloquence."

"But mind you," I said, "I'm taking no responsibility for any of this carry-on. If the pair of you come a cropper, deserves you right."

Now I'm not much of a man with a pen, but I did what I

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could. That night after three hours' struggle I ended up with a crate of empties and a darling little note to Janzee.

I'd hardly posted the thing when I got an answer—by special messenger, no less. It was written in dark green ink on pale blue notepaper and the scent would have floored a grown man at twenty paces.

She was desperate, she was happy, she was hoping. Mike was about to prove his love for her, she felt sure of that! My heart bled for the girl but sure, what could I do? The hand of fate was in the lap of the gods, as you might say. I just sat, supped and waited.

Six days went by and back he came. If I hadn't known him so well I'd have sworn he'd been in strict training for a week. His face was alight with the sort of glow that nobody over thirty ever gets again; his hair nearly crackled and his eyes were bright enough to read by.

He just stood there grinning at me.

"Now look," I said, "if you think I'm going to ask you where you've been—where've you been?"

"Ah, and wouldn't you like to know?"

"That's why I'm asking."

"Well now, it's a long story and I'll see you get to hear the whole lot of it. But not just now."

"What then?"

"I want you to telephone Janzee and tell her I'd like to see her—tonight."

"Just that?"

"Just that. If she asks any questions tell her it's going to be a big night—for all of us."

"Ah well, I only hope you've got something good. If them two ever cut loose on us again, with or without you, I'll be out of that place before you or anyone else can say Mother McCrea."

"She has that much money," he said, sort of vague, "she doesn't know where it is."

"Mike Duffy," I said, "you're the biggest scoundrel unhung, but I know you're not after her money."

"You've a massive brain," he said, laughing his head off. "I wouldn't care if she was more than twenty million in debt."

So I did as I was told, and her voice flowed over the telephone like warm milk and honey.

"That's fine, that's marvellous! I knew—I just knew in

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my heart of hearts that he was really wonderful. But is he all right?"

"All right? Well now, I've had me doubts about that for years."

"No, you know what I mean—physically? I did catch him with some heavy stuff that first visit and you never know about delayed concussion and that sort of thing."

"Ha!" I told her. "You couldn't dent Mike Duffy's head with a steam shovel."

That night we got all dressed up and ready. It was the first time I'd ever seen him washed, shaved, dressed and sober.

We got up to the top floor and went into the same room. Everything looked so much like the last time that I almost ducked as I went in.

Aunt Clarrie looked at me, and believe it or not I swear her fuzz bristled.

Janzee said, "Mike!"

Mike said, "Janzee!"

I said, "Good evenin'," and Aunt Clarrie made a gargling noise.

"Well," said Mike, "I've done it." Janzee threw both arms round his neck and put her face just about two kisses away from his. "Done what Mike? Tell me—you must tell me, quickly."

"I've sold out," he said triumphantly.

"Sold out?" said the three of us like a barber-shop quartet.

"Lock, stock and beer-barrel."

Aunt Clarrie was the fastest. "I don't believe it," she growled. "Where's the papers?"

"Not quite ready yet, but you'll see them all right."

Janzee went almost limp. "Thank you Mike—thank you. Now ask me."

"Will you marry me?"

"Yes, Mike."

"Listen," I said, "will you say that again very slowly?"

"Will you marry me?"

"Not that," I shouted.

"You mean the sale? Ah, don't worry. Your job is as safe as if nothing had happened."

"Well now," I said, "it isn't me job I'm worried about. I'm near retiring age anyway. I just thought you'd never do it."

"Done and finished with. Now, is nobody going to congratulate us?"

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"God bless you both," I said, "and may you never feel the weight of regret."

Aunt Clarrie blinked several times.

"Honey," she said, "if you're gonna be happy, I'm gonna be happy."

"I hate to say this," said Mike, giving Janzee a squeeze, "but I've got to go now. It's terrible quick, I know, and I count every second away from you as wasted. But I've got a mountain of work ahead of me. Not only that," he added with a grin, "I've got to spend some time in the jeweller's."

We left them there both looking as though they had been run over by a brewer's dray.

Now I come to think of it, that's not really too wild a statement.

We got into the car, Mike jumped on the pedal and we nearly left the rear wheels behind.

"I've got to enlarge a bit on what you've just heard," he said suddenly.

"I've heard enough to go on with," I said, hardly able to think straight.

"Don't you want to know who I've sold to?"

"Does it matter a tinker's cuss?" I asked.

"Well now, it just might." Something in his voice made me sit up.

"What kind of shenanigans have you been up to?"

"I looked for a buyer, have you got that?"

"I have."

"And would you believe it, I found an American company mad keen to buy."

"If you've done what I think you've done, you'll rue the day."

"This company is called The Arco Development Corp. Inc."

"Carry on," I said.

"But sure, they're only little. They're owned by the Eastern Seaboard Finance Co. Inc."

"Tell me now," I said, as leery as I could, "who might they be owned by?"

He hesitated for a second.

"Well funny enough, by the Dello Oil Company."

"—Inc.," I said. "And now Janzee owns a brewery and seventy-five pubs?"

"B'God," he said, "you're right."

"And that's where you spent the week?"

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"That's right, and research is terrible hard work."

"You'll never get away with it. When they find out—well, that old bag of bones will have the hair out of your head for a start."

"I'll tell you something. With a woman, the gesture is bigger than the deed. D'you follow me?"

"I've followed you long enough," I said. "I retired two minutes ago."

"Ah, you'll be well looked after. Tomorrow I'll fix the wedding with a special licence. And then away—and once I get her away the whole thing's over and done with."

Need I tell you? He did get away with it. In fact I never saw the going of him and now I've been retired and down here in my cottage for about a year.

I was only thinking about him the other day when I sat down for a little drop of the stuff after a back-breaking day in the garden.

A black-hearted villain, I thought to meself, never to drop me a line or let me know where he is.

As true as I'm alive, at that very minute an American car like a mobile bungalow pulled up outside. The pair of them tumbled through the door with the lovely smell of youth about them.

"I know," I said, "you're lost and you want the road to New York."

"Ah, it's good to see you," said Mike with a dig that nearly sank me floating rib.

"Hypocrite," I said. "You'd forgotten I was ever born."

"Truly," said Janzee, and her voice was now golden, "he never stopped talking about you. Not even when the twins were born."

I gaped open-mouthed.

"God help us," I said, "twins?"

"Two girls," she said with the happiness bubbling out of her, "three months old."

"Well at least you won't have two sons growing up like him. Now what about a drink then to wet the babies' heads?"

I know it was wicked of me, but I just couldn't wait to find out.

"I will not," said Mike, looking at me with the greatest severity. "I've half me family on the bottle already—isn't that enough?"

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IRWIN SHAW | SEARCH THROUGH THE

A poignant story of wartime New York — a meeting and a parting

WHEN he finally saw her he nearly failed to recognise her. He walked behind her for a half-block, vaguely noticing that the woman in front of him had long legs and was wearing a loose, college-girlish linen coat and a plain brown felt hat. Suddenly something about the way she walked made him remember—the almost affected rigidity of her back and straightness of throat and head, with all the movement of walking flowing up to the hips and stopping there, like Negro women in the South and Mexican and Spanish women carrying baskets on their heads.

For a moment he watched her walk along Twelfth Street, on the sunny side of the street, in front of the little tired gardens behind which lay the quiet, pleasantly run-down old houses. Then he caught up with her and touched her arm.

"Low heels," he said. "I never thought I'd live to see the day."

She looked round in surprise, then smiled widely and took his arm.

"Hello, Paul," she said. "I've gone in for health."

"Whenever I think of you," he said, "I think of the highest heels in New York City."

"The old days," Harriet said. They walked slowly down the sunny street towards Sixth Avenue. "I was a frivolous creature."

"You still walk the same way. As though you ought to have a basket of laundry on your head."

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STREETS OF THE CITY

"I practised walking like that for six months. You'd be surprised how much attention I get walking into a room that way."

"I wouldn't be surprised," Paul said, looking at her. She had black hair and pale, clear skin and a long, full body, and her eyes were deep grey and always brilliant, even after she'd been drinking for three days in a row.

Harriet began to walk a little faster. "I'm going to Wanamaker's," she said. "There's a couple of things I have to buy. Where you going?"

"Wanamaker's," Paul said. "I've been dying to go to Wanamaker's for three years."

They walked in silence for a few moments, Harriet's arm in his.

"Casual," Paul said. "I bet to the naked eye we look casual as hell. How do you feel?"

Harriet took her arm away. "Casual."

"Oh. Then that's how I feel, too." Paul whistled a few bars of the *1812 Overture*. He stopped and looked critically at her, and she stopped too and turned towards him, a slight, puzzled smile on her face. "What makes you dress that way?" he asked. "You look like Monday morning in Northampton."

"I just threw on whatever was nearest," Harriet said. "I'm just going to be out about an hour."

"You used to look like a nice big box of candy in your clothes." Paul took her arm and they started off again. "Viennese *bonbons*. Every indentation carefully exploited in silk and satin. Even if you were just going down to the corner for a bottle of gin, you'd look like something that ought to be eaten for dessert. This is no improvement."

"A girl has different periods in clothes," Harriet said. "Like Picasso. And if I'd known I was going to meet you, I'd've dressed differently."

Paul patted her arm. "That's better." He eyed her obliquely as they walked—the familiar long face, the well-known wide mouth with always a little too much lipstick on it,

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the little teeth that made her face, when she smiled, look suddenly like a little girl's in Sunday school.

"You're getting skinny, Paul," Harriet said.

Paul nodded. "I'm as lean as a herring. I've been leading a fevered and ascetic life. What sort of life have you been leading?"

"I got married." Harriet paused a moment. "Did you hear I got married?"

"I heard," Paul said. "The last time we crossed Sixth Avenue together the overhead railway was still up. I feel a nostalgic twinge for the Sixth Avenue 'L.'" They hurried as the lights changed. "On the night of January 9, 1940," Paul said, holding her elbow until they had crossed the street, "you were not home."

"Possible," Harriet said. "I'm a big girl now. I go out at night."

"I happened to pass your house and I noticed that the light wasn't on." They turned down towards Ninth Street. "I remembered how hot you kept that apartment—like the dahlia greenhouse in the Botanical Garden."

"I have thin blood," Harriet said gravely. "Long years of inbreeding in Massachusetts."

"The nicest thing about you," Paul said, "was you never went to sleep."

"Every lady to her own virtue," Harriet said. "Some women're beautiful, some're smart. Me, I never went to sleep. The secret of my great popularity—"

Paul grinned. "Shut up."

Harriet smiled back at him and they chuckled together. "You know what I mean," he said. "Any time I called you up—two, three in the morning—you'd come right over, lively and bright-eyed, all the rouge and mascara in the right places—"

"In my youth," said Harriet, "I had great powers of resistance."

"In the morning we'd eat breakfast at Beethoven. The Masterwork Hour, WNYC. Beethoven, by special permission of His Honour the Mayor, from nine to ten." Paul closed his eyes for a moment. "The Little Flower, Mayor for Lovers."

Paul opened his eyes and looked at the half-strange, half-familiar woman walking lightly at his side. He remembered lying close to her, dreamily watching the few lights of the towers of the night-time city framed by the big window of his

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bedroom against the black sky, and one night when she moved sleepily against him and rubbed the back of his neck where the hair was sticking up in sharp little bristles because he had had his hair cut that afternoon. Harriet had rubbed them the wrong way, smiling dreamily, without opening her eyes. "What a delicious thing a man is," she'd murmured. And she sighed, then chuckled a little and fallen asleep, her hand still on the clipped back of his neck. Paul smiled, remembering.

"You still laughing at my clothes?" Harriet asked.

"I remembered something I heard some place," Paul said. "'What a delicious thing a man is.'"

Harriet looked at him coldly. "Who said that?"

Paul squinted suspiciously at her. "Oswald Spengler."

"Uh huh," Harriet said soberly. "It's a famous quotation."

"It's a well-turned phrase," said Paul.

"That's what I think, too." Harriet nodded and walked a little faster.

They passed the run-down bar where they'd sat afternoons all one winter, drinking Martinis and talking and talking and laughing so loud the people at the other tables would turn and smile. Paul waited for Harriet to say something about the place, but she didn't even seem to notice it. "There's Eddie's Bar," Paul said.

"Uh huh." Harriet nodded.

"He's going to start making his Martinis with sherry when all the French vermouth runs out," Paul said.

"It sounds horrible." Harriet made a face.

"Is that all you have to say?" Paul said loudly, remembering the times he'd looked in to see if she was there.

"What do you want me to say?" Harriet looked honestly puzzled, but Paul had never known when she was lying to him or telling the truth anyway, and he hadn't improved in these two years, he discovered. "I don't want you to say anything," he said. "I'll take you in and buy you a drink."

"No, thanks. I've really got to get to Wanamaker's and back home in a hurry. Give me a raincheck."

"Yeah," Paul said sourly.

They turned into Ninth Street towards Fifth Avenue.

"I knew I'd meet you some place, finally," Paul said. "I was curious to see what would happen."

Harriet didn't say anything. She was looking absently at the buildings across the street.

"Don't you ever talk any more?" Paul asked.

"What *did* happen?"

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"Every once in a while," he began, "I meet some girl I used to know—"

"I bet the country's full of them," Harriet said.

"The country's full of everybody's ex-girls."

Harriet nodded. "I never thought of it that way, but you're right."

"Most of the time I think, Isn't she a nice, decent person? Isn't it wonderful I'm no longer attached to her? The first girl I ever had," Paul said, "is a policewoman now. She subdued a gangster single-handed in Coney Island last summer. Her mother won't let her go out of the house in her uniform. She's ashamed for the neighbours." "Naturally," Harriet said.

"Another girl I used to know changed her name and danced in the Russian Ballet. I went to see her dance the other night. She has legs like a Fordham tackle. I used to think she was beautiful. I used to think you were beautiful, too."

"We were a handsome couple," Harriet said. "Except you always needed a shave. That electric razor—"

"I've given it up."

They were passing his old house now and he looked at the doorway and remembered all the times he and Harriet had gone in and come out, the rainy days and the early snowy mornings with the milkman's horse silent on the white street behind them. They stopped and looked at the old red house with the shabby shutters and the window on the fourth floor they had both looked out of time and time again to see what the weather was. Paul remembered the first time, on a winter's night, he and Harriet had gone through that door together.

"I was so damn polite," Paul said softly.

Harriet smiled. "You kept dropping the key and saying 'Lord, lord' under your breath while you were looking for it."

"I was nervous. I wanted to make sure you knew exactly how matters stood. No illusions. Good friends, everybody understanding everybody else, another girl coming in from Detroit in six weeks—no claims on me, no claims on you . . ." Paul looked at the window on the fourth floor and smiled. "What a damn fool!"

"It's a nice, quiet street," Harriet said, looking up at the window on the fourth floor, too. She shook her head, took Paul's arm again. "I've got to get to Wanamaker's."

They started off.

"What're you buying at Wanamaker's?" Paul asked.

Harriet hesitated for a moment. "Nothing much. I'm looking at some baby clothes. I'm going to have a baby." They

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crowded over to one side to let a little woman with four dachshunds pass them in a busy tangle.

"Isn't it funny—me with a baby?" Harriet smiled. "I lie around all day and try to imagine what it's going to be like. In between, I sleep and drink beer to nourish us. I've never had such a good time in all my life."

"Well," said Paul, "at least it'll keep your husband out of the Army."

"Maybe. He's a raging patriot."

"Good. When he's at Fort Dix I'll meet you in Washington Square Park when you take the baby out for an airing in its perambulator. I'll put on a policeman's uniform to make it proper. I'm not such a raging patriot."

"They'll get you anyway, won't they?"

"Sure. I'll send you my picture in a lieutenant's suit. From Bulgaria. I have a premonition I'm going to be called on to defend a strategic point in Bulgaria."

"How do you feel about it?" For the first time, Harriet looked squarely and searchingly at him.

Paul shrugged. "It's going to happen. It's all damned silly, but it isn't as silly now as it was ten years ago." Suddenly Harriet laughed. "What's so funny?" Paul demanded.

"My asking you how you felt about something. I never used to have a chance. You'd let me know how you felt about everything. Roosevelt, James Joyce, Jesus Christ, Gypsy Rose Lee, Matisse, Yoga, liquor, sex and architecture—"

"I was full of opinions in those days." Paul smiled. "Lust and conversation. The firm foundations of civilised relations between the sexes." He turned and looked back at the window on the fourth floor. "That was a nice apartment," he said softly. "Lust and conversation—"

"Come on, Paul," Harriet said. "Wanamaker's isn't going to stay open all night."

"You were the only girl I ever knew I could sleep in the same bed with," Paul said.

"That's a hell of a thing to say to a girl." Harriet laughed. "Is that your notion of a compliment?"

Paul shrugged. "It's an irrelevant fact. Or a relevant fact. Is it polite to talk to a married lady this way?"

"No."

Paul walked along with her. "What do you think of when you look at me?" he asked.

"Nothing much," Harriet said.

"What're you lying about?"

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"Nothing much," Harriet said.

"Don't you ever think, What in the name of God did I ever see in him?"

"No." Harriet began to walk faster.

"Should I tell you what I think of when I look at you?"

"No."

"I've been looking for you for two years," Paul said.

"My name's been in the telephone book." Harriet hurried even more, wrapping her coat tightly around her.

"I didn't realise I was looking for you until I saw you."

"Please, Paul—"

"I would walk along the street and I'd pass a bar we'd been in together and I'd go in and sit there even though I didn't want a drink, not knowing why I was sitting there. Now I know. I was waiting for you to come in. I didn't pass your house by accident."

"Look, Paul," Harriet pleaded. "It was a long time ago and it was fine and it ended—"

"I was wrong," Paul said. "Do you like hearing that? I was wrong. You know, I never did get married after all."

"I know," Harriet said. "Please shut up."

"I walk along Fifth Avenue and every time I pass Saint Patrick's I half look up to see if you're passing, because I met you that day right after you'd had a tooth pulled. And it was cold and you were walking along with the tears streaming from your eyes and your eyes red and that was the only time I ever met you by accident any place." Harriet smiled. "That certainly sounds like a beautiful memory."

"Two years," Paul said. "I've gone out with a lot of girls in the last two years." He shrugged. "They've bored me and I've bored them. I keep looking at every woman who passes to see if it's you. All the girls I go out with bawl the hell out of me for it. I've been walking around, following girls with dark hair to see if it'll turn out to be you, and girls with a fur jacket like that old one you had, and girls that walk in that silly, beautiful way you walk. I've been searching the streets of the city for you for two years and this is the first time I've admitted it even to myself. That little Spanish joint we went the first time. Every time I pass it I remember everything—how many drinks we had and what the band played and what we said and the fat Cuban who kept winking at you from the bar and the very delicate way we landed up in my apartment..." They were both walking swiftly now, Harriet holding her hands stiffly down at her sides.

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"There is a particular, wonderful way you are joined together—"

"Paul, stop it!" Harriet's voice was flat but loud.

"Two years. In two years the edge should be dulled off things like that. Instead . . ." How can you make a mistake as big as that? Paul thought. How can you deliberately be as wrong as that? And no remedy. So long as you live, no remedy. He looked harshly at Harriet. Her face was set, as though she weren't listening to him and was intent only on getting across the street as quickly as possible. "How about you?" he asked. "Don't you remember?"

"I don't remember anything," she said. And then, suddenly, the tears sprang up in her eyes and streamed down the tight, distorted cheeks. "I don't remember a damn thing!" She wept. "I'm not going to Wanamaker's. I'm going home! Goodbye." She ran over to a cab that was parked at the corner and opened the door and sprang in. The cab spurted past Paul and he had a glimpse of Harriet sitting stiffly upright, the tears bitter and unheeded in her eyes.

He watched the cab go down Fifth Avenue until it turned. Then he turned the other way and started walking, thinking, I must move away from this neighbourhood, I've lived here long enough.

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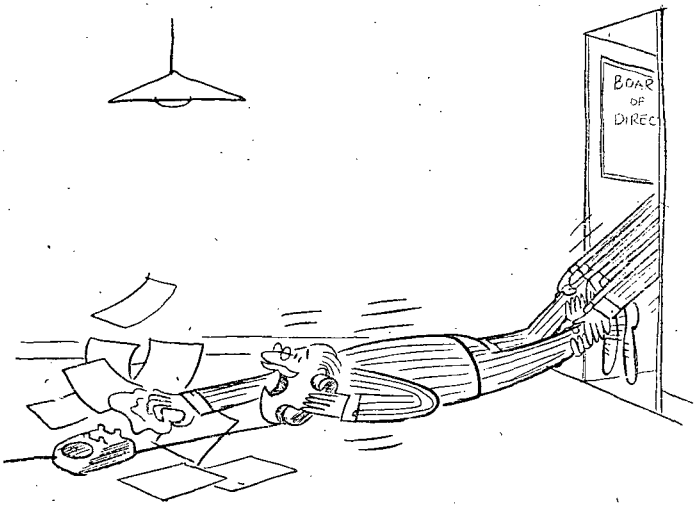

"I'll have to ring off now, Edith, I think the boss wants me."

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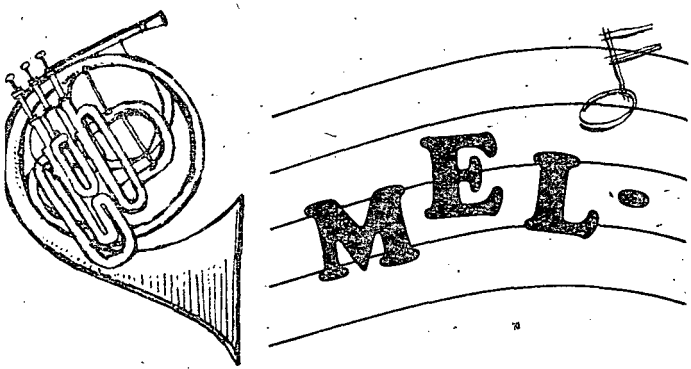

The children were singing. It was a terrible, wolf-like ululation, with a spectre of tune in it. Some, heads back, simply droned aloud to the sky. Any true voice, so far as it ever led, was once more drowned. Singers astray in a verse for a line boomed back again into the chorus with greater vigour . . . Overwrought by what he had brought about, the uncle cantered behind them with the accompaniment; some few notes twanged, lunatic, upon the air.

ELIZABETH BOWEN, *The Little Girls*

FRIENDS OF HARMONY

"Forty breaths and then number thirty-two, 'Behold the Morning Star,'" said old William.

They had reached the end of the second verse and the fiddlers were doing the up-bow stroke previous to pouring forth the opening chord of the third verse when, without a light appearing or any signal being given, a roaring voice exclaimed: "Shut up! Don't make your blaring row here! A fellow wi' a headache enough to split likes a quiet night."

Slam went the window.

"That's an ugly blow for we artists!" said the tranter, in a keenly appreciative voice.

"Finish the carrel, all who be friends of harmony!" said old William commandingly; and they continued to the end.

"Forty breaths and number nineteen!" said William firmly. "Give it 'im well; the choir can't be insulted in this manner!"

A light now flashed into existence, the window opened, and the farmer stood revealed as one in a terrific passion.

"Drown 'im—drown 'im!" the tranter cried, fiddling frantically. "Play fortissimy and drown his spaking!"

"Fortissimy!" echoed Michael Mail.

THOMAS HARDY, *Under the Greenwood Tree*

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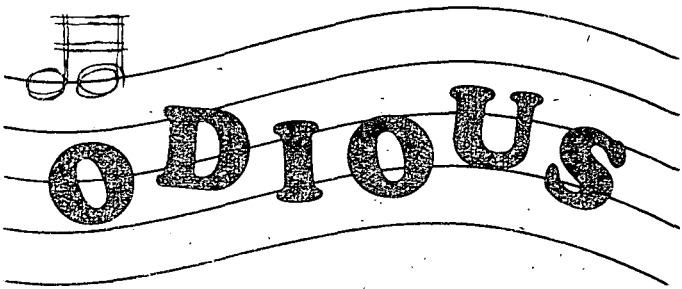

If there were a screen to look at, it would be better, he decided. If one could actually see the orchestra doing it, one's mind might be taken off the music itself. He tried to picture them—black and white sweating men, bows slashing the air all at one angle, heads nodding, cheeks puffing out.

Cymbals clashed and he started violently. They were working themselves into a frenzy. Surely, he dared hope, they could not sustain such a fury of sound much longer? The climax was such a wonderful relief that in happy gratitude he was just about to jump up and fill glasses when a single flute meandered into a solo passage; dying away, but not quite; returning with more assurance and inviting the whole orchestra to keep it company, which, one instrument after another, it did.

The end came quite unexpectedly. The music simply broke off. But crafty Charles was ready for it. He had opened his eyes for the last bars, shrugged himself up in his chair, and leaned forward, looking as pleased as Punch.

ELIZABETH TAYLOR, *In Summer Season*

Some cry up Haydn, some Mozart,
Just as the whim bites. For my part,
I do not care a farthing candle
For either of them—nor for Handel.

CHARLES LAMB

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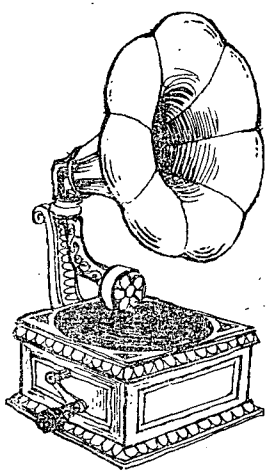

ROUSING CHEER

Uncle Matthew was no respecter of other people's early morning sleep, and after five o'clock one could not count on any, for he raged round the house, clanking cups of tea, shouting at his dogs, roaring at the housemaids, cracking the stock-whips which he had brought back from Canada on the lawn with a noise greater than gunfire, and all to the accompaniment of Galli-Curci on his gramophone, an abnormally loud one with an enormous horn, through which would be shrieked *Una voce poco fa*—"The Mad Song" from *Lucia*—"Lo, here the gen-tel lar-ha-hark"—and so on, played at top speed, thus rendering them even higher and more screeching than they ought to be.

NANCY MITFORD,
The Pursuit of Love

The Lost Chord

Seated one day at the organ
I jumped as if I'd been shot,
For the Dean was upon me, snarling,
"Stainer—and *make it hot*."

All week I swung Stainer and Barnby,
Bach, Gounod, and Bunnett in A;
I said, "Gosh, the old bus is a wonder!"
The Dean, with a nod, said "Okay."

D. B. WYNDHAM LEWIS

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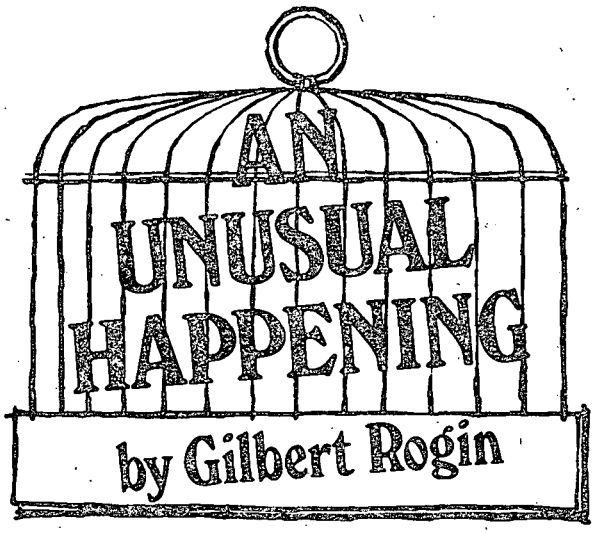

WHEN my wife left me I bought a bird for company. I chose a bird over other creatures because I didn't want something around to which in time I would become devoted; it has been my experience that most pets fall mysteriously ill, become melancholy and droop or pine or, inexplicably, run, crawl or fly away. Besides, my anticipated life span is half over and I will undoubtedly survive any small animal except for tortoises, parrots or carp, which are almost everlasting but towards the end more monument than flesh. There are enough claims made upon me not to have to endure these unnecessary impositions of love and death.

Above all, I didn't want a dog. In a way, a dog thinks it is an homuncule, following its master around with a look of imperfect understanding and how am I to tell it the truth? Furthermore, a dog is bred to be slavish (or to enslave), and I cherish my independence.

I didn't buy a fish because I wanted a beast that would be intriguing and talented; fish have their limits. In fact, I wanted a superior kind of bird, one that was clever rather than only pretty or tuneful. We would live together and if I chose to amuse the bird, or to divert myself with it, that was my privilege; and if the bird cared to amuse me, or to divert itself at my expense, that was its privilege, but our relationship

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wouldn't become unendurable if neither of us was in the mood.

Of course, I accepted certain responsibilities when I bought my bird. I contracted to provide food, water and gravel, to clean the bottom of the cage and the perches and to cover the cage with a cloth when there was a draught or the nights were cold. I also reserved, however, the right to cover it when I didn't want to be disturbed—to create an artificial night as it were and, if that failed and the bird persisted in its attempts to humour me with silly tricks and chatter, to lock the cage up in the hall cupboard with my umbrellas and galoshes.

The bird I selected for my pet was a mynah bird; I had been told you can teach it to talk and perform. A mynah is a cunning bird, although one with a forked tongue; I have read somewhere that mynahs' tongues are split when they are fledglings so they can articulate, but this may well be a myth.

I have had my mynah for two weeks now and have had no success in teaching it to speak even the most rudimentary words and phrases, although I often address it. In the beginning, I tried to train it to say "hello"—a sensible enough start—but for all my pains it only sat on its perch and looked, I thought, scornfully at me. Then I sought to teach it to say "goodbye"—a logical step—but with the same lack of success. I even tried to get it to enunciate a simple, declarative sentence—"I love you"; I failed in that effort, too. I became, as you can imagine, enraged and discouraged.

Finally, I gave up. Either I was a miserable teacher or, more plausibly, my bird had to get acclimated to me, my room and my way of life before it would respond to my instruction, or you can't teach an old mynah bird new tricks, or *enfin*, I had a dumb bird.

Two days ago, my mynah made its first sound—a low and variable whistle. It was not the natural whistle of a bird, but a wolf whistle. I have never whistled that way; in fact I think that kind of whistle is common, so the bird couldn't have picked it up from me. Perhaps my mynah is a second-hand bird and learned to whistle from its previous owner.

Thinking the time was ripe, I at once began to declaim its curriculum: "Hello! Goodbye!' I love you!"

My mynah only whistled in return.

Yesterday, the bird began to imitate traffic noises. No doubt its former owner—for I am now convinced it is a used bird—hung its cage by a window overlooking the street and it became accustomed to the sounds of traffic.

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Again I went to its cage and said, with precision and feeling: "Hello! Goodbye! I love you!"

My bird merely shifted gears and accelerated, in reply.

An hour ago, as I was watching television, I heard my wife say: "I may be mean on the outside, but you're selfish and hide your meanness." So she had thought it over, had returned and let herself in (she never gave back her key, of course), and had decided to make up—on her terms; this spiteful lie was her idea of an overture of peace, which is not unlike her.

I turned around, but there was no-one besides myself in my room. While I was trying to figure it out, I heard my wife start to say the same thing all over again: "I may be mean on the outside, but you're selfish and hide your meanness."

This time I was ready and whirled about to confront her before she had completed the sentence. It was my bird talking in my wife's voice. As I stared, bewildered and outraged, at the mynah, it started to repeat the inane refrain once more, so I covered its cage. This had no effect; the bird wouldn't shut up.

I have locked the mynah away now, but I can still hear that absurd judgment through my cupboard door. I have tried to puzzle out this unusual happening and there seem to me to be several possible solutions.

It could be that my wife had a lover, though I find it hard to believe she left me for another. But if she did, might it not be, by some terrible coincidence, that my bird once belonged to this man and that she had spoken the sentence to him as she had spoken it to me and the bird overheard it and memorised it? If my wife and this lover had run off together, then he would not want to be encumbered with a bird. But why should she leave me for him if her opinion of us is identical? Perhaps she was just relating, for her lover's amusement or edification, something derogatory (and inaccurate) about me.

This, too, is not unlike her.

However, another equally credible solution presents itself. A mynah bird faithfully reproduces mechanical noises, but I gather that though it can mimic accent and inflexion, its timbre is invariable, like the speech of a ventriloquist's dummy or a voice over the telephone. It could be then that the bird's previous owner—a stranger—made the same assertion to his or her spouse, or lover. If there is one such instance, there are, no doubt, others; human relationships, I have always

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thought, are pretty much on a low level and overwhelmingly repetitive.

Or, on the other hand, perhaps I repeated this lie in my sleep and that's how the bird learned it; or, even, it's barely possible that the reverberations, the sound waves set off by it had not entirely died out, but lingered, terribly diminished, in my room—for it was, I believe, the last thing that she said to me—and the mynah, having superior or more sensitive hearing than man (here I am not in possession of the facts and am conjecturing) had distinguished the faint tremors of its syllables.

It may be, too, that a few days ago, when I was passionately seeking to educate the bird and lost my temper, I inadvertently told it off in those fateful and remembered words. But I must admit a final solution—was the sentence, after all, one that I created and delivered? Was it I who accused my wife so forcefully at the moment of her leave-taking, and have come to attribute the allegation to her; and, when I was vexed with the bird, said it once more? This has to be the reasonable explanation, but it is the one, of course, that I least prefer.

Why, though, did the mynah commit that particular remark to memory? That's the real mystery, for it is not one, you will agree, that is inherently noteworthy.

I suppose I will have to get rid of my bird now, too, and, *tant pis*, I had grown rather fond of it.

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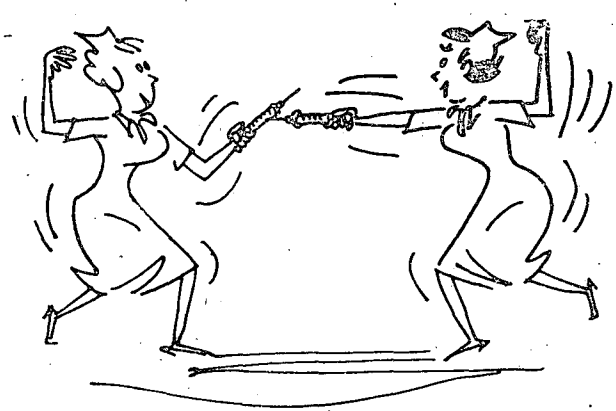

"En garde!"

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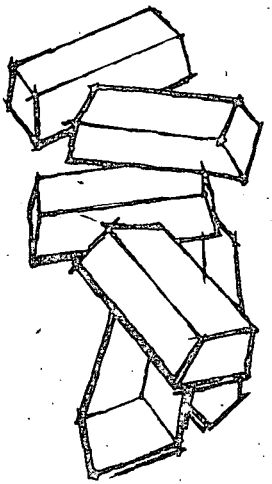
BY VICTOR EDWARDS



Basket of Gold

HE TORE AT THE BARS, WORKING WITH FEVERISH INTENSITY — THEY WOULD FETCH THOUSANDS

A STIFLING, windless day, aching hot, with the sun burning down, sparkling the surface of the sea. The fore-and-aft rigged ketch swung rhythmically at anchor, sails furled, lifting and falling easily with the swell, like a sleeping gull with folded wings.

It was early evening when Hendrixson struck gold, a tiny particle of it, glued to a chunk of flaking iron by the chemical action under the sea for nearly a hundred and fifty years.

It was the first tremendous clue. He had been sorting through the morning's haul of debris from the wreck, chipping away the coral to examine pieces of metal and shreds of blackened wood through a powerful magnifying glass.

Pasquale, the Indian help, padded about the deck, collecting and tipping overboard the rubbish spread all over the place that Hendrixson had finished examining. It was one of his jobs to clear the deck. For a few *centavos* a day Pasquale was crewman, winchman and general cleaner-up. He couldn't understand a word they said; he didn't know what they were doing three miles off the bay and he was convinced that both Englishmen were quite mad.

Jackson was lounging in a deck chair, smoking idly. Soon, it would be time for another dive. I sweat to get this junk up, he thought. Hendrixson looks at it, Pasquale tosses it overboard and where does it get us? Every day it's been like this. If it goes on much longer, I shall get like Pasquale —I won't know what it's all about and I won't care.

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Suddenly, Hendrixson came hurrying along the deck, lanky, bird-like, a ridiculous figure in knee-length khaki shorts, an eager look on his thin face.

He held out the tiny chip resting on his upturned palm. "It's gold," he said.

Jackson stared down. He was shorter than Hendrixson and much older. His face was hard and flat and he had cold blue eyes. Stripped to the waist, his body had a youthful look with an easy turn to the arms. Broad shoulders fell smoothly to narrow hips and his stomach was a pattern of muscle above stained jeans.

Hendrixson said: "It's not from a brooch or a ring . . . don't you see? It means there *is* gold down there and if the stories are true it will be gold bars. I knew all along there was something in this wreck story."

Jackson felt the first jolt of excitement. For him, this news meant only one thing. If he could get the gold up from the wreck he could go back to England with big money for Mary and the boy.

When he had first met Hendrixson in that bar he had just finished work on the Onslow salvage job. He was on his way home with nearly seven hundred pounds on him after a three-month slog and one lucky game of poker. Then, Hendrixson had talked about the wreck and he had cabled home two hundred pounds and thrown the rest into what Mary would have called another of his wildcat schemes.

But he had made sure Hendrixson was no cheap crook. He'd seen the colour of his money and Hendrixson had left all the hiring of the gear and the chartering of the lugger to him at Sao Paulo.

Then, the weeks of red tape, official questions. You couldn't just hunt for treasure your own way these days, taking your own risks. Every bureaucratic little nut with an ounce of title had to get in on the act, too. Half to you and half to the Government—that was the law here.

The times they had nearly given the whole thing up! Wearing, hopeless weeks, monotonous searching over the same spot until they had finally located it.

Food and supplies were running dangerously low, now. And going down twice a day, sometimes in the old barnacle-scarred diving-suit when he had wanted real depth, had taken it out of him. He felt tired—a deadly, overpowering tiredness. But, now, he knew every trick of the current, every

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patch of silt. He could visualise the shape of her and how she lay.

He grinned to himself, feeling the incentive of Hendrixson's clue well up in him as new strength. After years of work on underwater bridge pilings, harbour construction and dam foundations, here he was chasing gold like some adventure-struck kid.

Well, you could always learn something. Even he had thought some shape of the wreck would have been visible. Instead, it had been covered with coral, making a reef below the sea, and only the tell-tale straight lines of the twelve-feet-long anchor shank had given him the first indication that this was where the wreck was. Most of the exposed timbers had long since been eaten by the Teredo shipworm and nature had carried out a neat camouflage job.

Yet, miraculously, the pattern of ribbing on her bows still lifted out of the bed of the sea, cemented by coral. She was down fairly deep—fifteen fathoms. She must have gone down stern first. He knew enough about this game to know that any silver would have turned to black powder. Even steel would flake to dust under the sea, but gold... Hendrixson was right about that. He had checked. The stuff could remain submerged for centuries without harm.

Hendrixson cut into his thoughts. "Of course, we still can't be a hundred per cent sure," he said. "But I told you there was something in this local story. I know you've been fed up..." His voiced trailed off.

Jackson looked at him steadily. Hendrixson had never been in a diving suit. He was a science master at some obscure provincial grammar school until some money and an inborn taste for adventure had made him drift out here. But he was conscientious, he followed the rules, made sure Pasquale was doing his job on the winch. Jackson asked no more while he was on the sea bottom.

"I think I know where the stuff might be," Jackson said. "It's under the magazine and that's collapsed. It's just a solid, welded mass of those bloody cannon-balls, covered with coral. Oxy-arc equipment is out of the question. Even if we had the money for it, the minute we started asking around we would stir it up ashore. At the moment they think we're a couple of nuts, so let them go on thinking it. There's just one way in—break through the keel, upwards and into her."

Jackson was talking half to himself now. "It means standing underneath to do it, but the whole lot might come down.

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I haven't told you this before—she's like a piece of wood stuck at an angle in a stream. And she could come down while I'm working underneath her. Or she could topple while I'm inside, and with that weight of iron . . ."

Hendrixson said slowly: "I don't want—"

Jackson cut in abruptly. "It's my risk. It's a calculated one, and don't you forget it—my split on the take is sixty pere cent . . ."

The weather held. The sea stayed flat and calm and Jackson was able to work down there three hours a day. In six days, wearing double-thickness gloves and using heavy hammers and picks, he had gouged a way in.

Now, he was really feeling the strain. In the dim, near-total blackness the great hulk of it loomed about him, as threatening as a nightmare. It was like burrowing into a coral reef—except that this reef could move and come down on him, driving him into the mud and darkness of eternity.

By the eighth afternoon everything was ready for him to climb into the waist-high hole. He signalled for the basket and when it came down he clambered, inch by inch, into the hole as though it was a pile of eggs, pulling the basket after him.

For a few seconds, he crouched on the broad lip, absolutely still. Then, he switched on his powerful, water-tight torch, his eyes alert for the tiniest movement of silt within the cave that would tell him something was using it as a lair. In the weeks he had worked he had seen sharks, barracuda and jewfish, and once a grouper, but they hadn't bothered him.

The torch threw no beam, no spot of light. A thousand coloured prisms and interlacing glints and gleams danced before him, giving shape with diffused light.

His eyes took in a miniature forest of weed that swayed together in an eerie and precise dance. Small fish darted and hung poised, gaping regiments.

Now, he crawled cautiously in, his weighted boots raising puffs of silt. If there's nothing here I'll get out fast, he thought. If there's gold, I mustn't be so busy I forget everything else.

Then, he saw it. The glimpse of a metal band under coral, a clasp, and a streak of tough, blackened teak that had once been a chest. With a hatchet, he broke off pieces of razor-sharp coral. The thing began to crumble and there they were, neatly stacked bars, slime-and-weed covered, but solid-looking.

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He held the torch over one of the top bars and scraped at a patch on it. As the hatchet blade bit into the soft metal, the torch picked up the bright look of gold. He gathered four bars in his arms and put them in the basket hooked to the side of the entrance hole. Now, he felt only the lust for it. He tore at the bars and threw them in, working with feverish intensity.

Eight, twelve, sixteen. The bars would fetch thousands. Of course they were gold—they must be gold.

Another four bars. But his haste was clumsy. They slipped from his gloves in slow motion, burying themselves in a soundless explosion of silt. The hulk gave a terrible lurch. The escape hole moved upwards at a crazy angle above his head.

Not now, he thought. Not now, when I've got so far. He lay there, waiting for the silent avalanche of tons of cannon-balls, masked behind a wall of coral and weed. The hulk was still and watchful now, like a beast daring the slightest movement.

The compressed air whispered in his suit, a last link from the world above. Fear crowded in on him, but he forced himself to get to his feet slowly, gently, although he wanted to lie there, soothing this threatening monster which had suddenly come alive.

He wanted to get out desperately, but he couldn't leave the basket of gold, not after everything he had been through to get it. He got to the guide rope, signalling with a tug, waiting for the answering haul that would make the basket swing away in a long arc on its journey to the surface.

He stood on the edge of the gap, gathering the slack of his lifeline, the basket swinging away, when the wreck gave another great heave. In that split second, he sensed the mass of piled-up iron bursting apart and then he had thrown himself off, sinking into the mud, clawing himself out and feeling the wonderful pull of the line as he began to rise.

The terrifying blur of the wreck, crashing sideways in clouds of silt, missed him by a foot.

Two hours later he was standing on deck, dragging on a cigarette, trying to keep his hands from shaking. He felt dizzy and a little sick. He had taken risks on the way up. Normally, he was careful to exercise every ten feet as the pressure lessened, to rid himself of excess nitrogen in the blood. Today, he had got to the surface a bit too quickly.

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As usual, debris lay all over the deck. The bars made an untidy pile in a dirty pool of water and weed. Hendrixson had checked each one and they lay where he had dropped them in his excitement.

Hendrixson was stuttering: "Isn't it marvellous? Isn't it simply marvellous?"

"How much?" Jackson said.

Hendrixson shrugged, grinning. "Who knows? A fortune . . . certainly not less than four hundred thousand pounds."

"There'll be no more. The wreck's gone."

"You mean . . .?"

"That's exactly what I mean," Jackson said. "Forget it. I've had a lot of luck." He slapped the other on the back. "We're rich. Even if we have to give half to those blood-suckers sitting around in their air-conditioned Government offices. Let's go below and kill the last bottle of Scotch. This is a celebration."

Now it was evening. The sun slipped away from the world. The gulls had gone home. Pinpoints of light sprang from the distant coastline. The sea gleamed, phosphorescence lit the surface.

In the tropic darkness, Pasquale moved about the deck. Another mess to clear up. That was the way of it every night.

Slowly, groping about, he gathered up the day's collection of debris. He never saw the glint of gold as he laid the bars in his arms. In two journeys he had heaved the lot over the side to be buried for ever in the ocean depths.

Down in the cabin he could hear them laughing again. If they're so happy, he thought, tomorrow I'll ask for more money.

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SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD (APRIL ISSUE)

Across. 1, *Registered.* 6, *Talc.* 10, *Layer.* 11, *Harvester.* 12, *Barnacle.* 13, *Rodin.* 15, *Ink-well.* 17, *Spheric.* 19, *Hospice.* 21, *Riposte.* 22, *Ethos.* 24, *Old Glory.* 27, *Muscovite.* 28, *Kyoto.* 29, *Skye.* 30, *Impresario.*

Down. 1, *Roll.* 2, *Guy Fawkes.* 3, *Siren.* 4, *Ethical.* 5, *Earless.* 7, *Acted.* 8, *Chronicles.* 9, *Heirship.* 14, *Michaelmas.* 16, *Emission.* 18, *Reservoir.* 20, *Egotism.* 21, *Red deer.* 23, *Husky.* 25, *Lakes.* 26, *Polo.*

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Sally Hanson was blonde and beautiful, and she wouldn't budge an inch before she had consulted her horoscope...

VENUS SUBJECT

by SAMUEL SELVON

NOW that it's summer and people are off on their holidays, reminds me about a girl I used to know who married in Spain during her two weeks' vacation. A kind of whirlwind romance it was, destined by the stars, but she believed it was the right man for her and I'm glad it happened over there instead of England.

And I'm glad, too, that she sent in her resignation even before she returned to London, as it would have been heart-breaking to see her at work every day and know she was married to somebody else.

Her name was Sally Hanson and she was beautiful and blonde. I met her when I went to work for a building firm in the City. During the tea break on my first morning it happened that a chair was vacant at the table where she was sitting with another girl. I sat down a bit self-consciously, because they'd both been eyeing me while I was queueing for tea.

"There you are!" Sally said triumphantly to her companion the moment I was seated. "Didn't I tell you?" And without any preliminary whatsoever she turned to me and asked, "When's your birthday?"

I had prepared a line or two about being new to the firm and that sort of thing, but before I knew it I had blurted out the date of my birth.

Sally looked at the other girl as if she'd won a bet. (Afterwards, I found out she had.) "I knew it! Just what I said. They cannot hide."

She turned to me once again. "You are rather shy on the

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surface, but very warm-hearted, really. You are seldom cheerful yourself, but you go out of your way to make others happy. That's the right tie you're wearing, because blue is your colour."

She slowed down and took an excited sip of tea. "You know, we really wouldn't have been so bold except that it was all forecast."

"Forecast?" I said. All I could think of was the football pools.

"Yes. It said for me today, 'A stranger will come into your life—be bold and you will find an understanding atmosphere.' By the way, I'm Sally Hanson."

It was all a bit quick for me, but who was I to knock my luck? In one swift appraisal when I'd come into the canteen, she had been the one who stood out.

"Sally is a confirmed horoscope fan," her friend said apologetically. "She doesn't do a thing before she reads her forecast."

I wouldn't have cared if she loved beetles. Her eyes were truly like stars. I listened attentively: it wouldn't have mattered if she was talking about an expedition to the North Pole.

"This is your lucky week, but you must take care of your health. Today's Monday. Did you get any letters this morning?"

I wished I could have said yes, but I thought it best to tell the truth at this early stage.

"Never mind," Sally said, "many invitations will come your way towards the end of the week. A breath of romance will blow into the lives of single men . . ."

Then, for the first time a little doubtful, she asked, "You are single, aren't you?"

I assured her that I was, and presumed that she was in like state, though these days you can't depend on looking for wedding rings, except as a kind of keep-off sign.

But Sally was available. The only thing that had me worried was what the psychologists say—you know, about man being the hunter, the aggressive one, pressing his advances. It seemed as if Sally was doing all the attacking. But why worry? I'd have a chance to employ my charm and methods, I hoped.

And it worked out that way. I saw her home that evening after work, to her flat in Shepherd's Bush. And during the

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days that followed we were together most of the time. That is, unless something cropped up in her horoscope which prevented her going out or having visitors.

"Not this evening," she said firmly, once. "This is not my lucky day."

"You don't have to believe it word for word," I told her. I happened to have two tickets in my pocket for a show at the Palladium.

She opened a newspaper and turned to the day's forecast. "'Avoid any entertainment this evening—far better to stay at home with a book,'" she read. "It's always been right so far—didn't it help me meet you?"

I didn't say anything to that. It was hopeless to argue with Sally.

But things reached a head for us that summer. We'd tossed up whether to have two weeks in Spain or a driving holiday in Wales, and the home side won. I made all the arrangements. I hired a car and studied road maps and bought some camping gear. I was really looking forward to that holiday with Sally.

And then she took a peep into the future. No advertisement for travel abroad could have been better than that horoscope reading.

"'Don't miss an opportunity to travel in a foreign country,'" she read. "'There is romance in store for you, the whole course of your life is likely to change. All signs show you may meet the man of your dreams.'"

"You never told me what your dream man was like," I said, trying to make a joke of it.

Sally sighed. "Tall. Bronze. Intelligent. Wonderful sense of humour. Has artistic tastes, and isn't given to flights of fancy."

The way she said that, you could tell she was quoting some fortune teller. Maybe she was joking too, but I took it seriously. I didn't measure up to her standards. I'm just an ordinary guy.

"So you're going to Spain," I said.

"You can't fight your fate," she said.

"Well, I guess there isn't anything more to say," I said, tight-lipped.

I spent my two weeks driving all over the country, and when I got back to the office I had succeeded in getting the edge off my feelings. I learned then that she had married while on holiday and resigned her job.

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That was that. I thought I'd never see her again, but the stars destined otherwise. They arranged an unexpected meeting one evening near Marble Arch, on my way home from work.

When I shook hands with the man Sally introduced as her husband, I was a bit surprised. He was short and dumpy, wore glasses, and was at least twice her age.

I'd have felt sorry for her except that she looked wonderful, absolutely smashing, with deep contentment shining in her eyes.

They were in a hurry, but she made him give me one of his cards which I took absently, and I promised without much sincerity to look them up some time.

As I walked away I glanced casually at the card.

It gave their telephone number and address, and then in bold, black important letters it said: **Dr. Ali Benski, Professional Palmist.**

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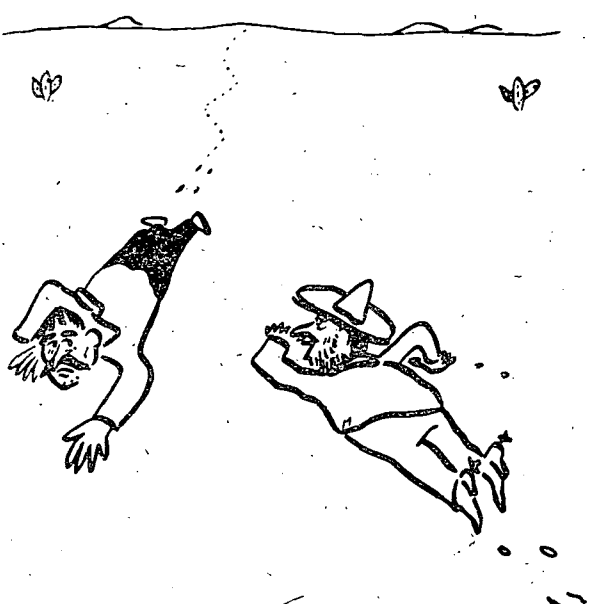

"Where you heading?"

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Argosy knows no Iron Curtains in its search for the best stories: we are more interested in good writing than in politics. So, we suspect, is the author of this story, a 38-year-old Russian whose style, sensitivity and understanding transcend frontiers. Here, then, straight from Moscow, and published for the first time in English.

ANTLERS

BY YURY KAZAKOV

SHE had spent several days at the rest home by the sea. She had come after a long illness and for three days never went out at all but sat on the cold, echoing veranda, sadly watching the squirrels leaping among the pines.

On the fourth day she awakened early; through her window she could see the twilight of a slow spring dawn. She dressed and went out on the porch. Slowly her face grew pink from the cold, the smell of the March snow, the sight of the pine-covered hills, and the silence and freshness of the morning.

Cautiously she stepped down into the road which had thawed the day before and frozen again overnight, and took a few steps, spreading her arms to keep her balance on the slippery surface. The ice crunched and tinkled under her feet. This crunching, tinkling sound was clear and loud, and it reminded her of something long forgotten and so sweet and secret that it made her heart thump. Without a backward glance, she left the house farther and farther behind her as she climbed uphill and saw the frozen sea, with its dark line of unfrozen water on the horizon, and watched the morning getting ever lighter until finally the sun rose, as yet dimly white and weak.

She came back smelling of frost and when she went into the dining room and said good morning to the others she kept her face low, hiding her smile and her dazzled eyes.

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Like all convalescents, she had moments of unreasonable happiness, and her happiness was particularly fresh and sharp because she was sixteen and had dark, reflective, enigmatic eyes and was alone and free; and her imagination was naive and romantic because everything around her seemed to her unusual and fantastic.

Every morning the deep, kind voice of the loudspeaker filled her with delight: "*Rune Riga! Paresi Laiks!*" Every morning, her heels crunching in her own tracks of the day before, she went into the hills, occasionally stretching out, her thin face upturned, for a pussy-willow branch to take home and put in a vase. All alone, she wandered farther and farther into the pine woods, or went down to the sea. Terrified, she walked way out on to the ice, stopped finally, not daring to breathe or move, feeling the ice heave and rock beneath her.

Going back, she gazed with thoughtful curiosity at the empty houses boarded up for the winter. For some reason they made her feel both frightened and gay, as if she were entering the fantastic world of the fairytales which she still read in secret. She had made no friends at the rest home, only saying "how d'you do" politely in a small voice, very nearly dropping a curtsey like a schoolgirl, blushing and afraid to look up.

She enjoyed her solitude, her freedom, her long walks more and more, and she hated the thought of going back. But the more she kept herself to herself—the more she tried to look grown-up and independent, the more she looked a little girl.

One day she met a young man on skis, in a knitted sweater and with long thin legs. He slowed down, stopped and watched her with great interest, but she hurried on, firmly staring at her feet, trying to look preoccupied and unconscious of the frightened air this gave her. Since then he had often come skiing in this direction, flying down the hills and looking round but never seeing her again...

When the sun was out, the houses in the woods were each prettier than the other, the trees and fences had blue-green shadows, the squirrels leapt from pine to pine and the moss clinging to the posts was bright green and yellow. At night the clock struck on the tower of the Protestant Church; occasionally there came the two-toned whistle of the electric train; the house creaked; the ice rustled in the drainpipes and the sea roared in the distance. A sharp, prickly smell came from the dry snow, the pine bark and the bitter, sticky buds on the trees. Every evening the sunset was more drawn out, more crystalline, the sky above it deeper and colder in tone,

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and the stars in the east bluer and more piercing. And when, after the sun had gone down, the sky in the west was veiled with a soft yellow turning to green, then lilac, it threw into black relief the trees, the houses with their transparent glass verandas and the church topped by its cross.

At night, in her dreams, she flew over the hills and heard distant music and her heart pounded with fear and delight. Waking up with a feeling of dizzy lightness, she reflected importantly on what was happening to her. For what was happening was quite extraordinary and, to her, inexplicable. She scarcely answered any of her letters, she was in love with the lonely woods, with music and with solitude. She loved the emptiness, the silence, the quiet sunny clearings, the red willows, the silver-grey Canadian pines, the gloomy, rocky grottoes in the hills.

In the evening, the fire was lit in the drawing room with its old-fashioned furniture. The birch logs, standing on end, crackled, crimson shadows danced on the walls, there was a slight smell of smoke and the great cold windows which faced the west shone.

This was the moment she waited for. She tiptoed in, sat in an armchair with her legs tucked under her and looked at the fire, her eyes enormous and shining. Sometimes, glancing at the windows and listening to the distant conversation in the dining room, she went to the upright walnut piano and raised the lid. The keys were dark with age and stiff with cold. Pressing the creaky pedal, she struck a note and listened tensely to the dying-away sound. She wished she could remember the music she had heard in her dream. Shivering, her fingers colder and colder, she picked a few chords, feeling that at any moment it would come back to her... Was this it? No, not quite that... Carefully closing the piano, she breathed on the varnish, leaving a misty patch, and went back to her armchair, to gazing absently into the fire, listening to the crackling, delighting in the oddly melancholy, homelike smell of the birch logs. "What's happening to me?" she asked herself, amazed. "Why this heartache? And why should the pain be so sweet?"

For some time her attention had been attracted to one of the empty houses. It stood on a large plot, surrounded by trees and almost hidden by its fence. The doors were boarded up and the windows shuttered. It had a high-pitched, pointed, dark-tiled roof and steps covered with snow—only the top ones had thawed out. A pair of lacquer-brown antlers was

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nailed under one of the first-floor windows, which for some reason was unshuttered and, like the veranda, gleamed faintly at sunset. The snow round the house was clean, untouched, the large plot seemed unusually lonely, the fence unusually tall and strong. Only in one place were the planks broken and the dogs went in and out through the hole. Their deep, clear tracks led to a stout pine and from there fanned out into the back of the clearing.

Antler House was the name the girl had given it and the clearing, and now she hardly went anywhere else, delighted to find her tracks of the day before and no-one else's as she sat down on an old stump, tucked her coat about her knees and froze, motionless.

She sat thinking about the shuttered house. She imagined its empty, echoing, sombre rooms, its silence at night, the needle-thin moonbeams breaking through the shutters.

The clearing was full of light and glitter; the sun was so warm that the resin melted on the sunny sides of the pines and the willows sweated, standing in dark crescents of melted snow, their budding branches already supple, furry, misty-grey.

It happened on a day when the air was more than usually warm and sharply scented, and her head swam, her mind was foggy, and her heart felt more than ever faint and timid. She gasped, covered her mouth with her hands and gaped at the house.

The first-floor window had opened and a little man was looking out.

He climbed out backwards, felt for the antlers and got a firm grip of one of the branches. Immediately a long, narrow ladder was pushed out through the window. The little man set it up and climbed down to the steps of the porch. He was followed by another.

They must be trolls, she thought, trolls who live in the enchanted house. Crouching, her mouth open, she watched them with shining eyes.

They were dressed in old-fashioned clothes: stockings and breeches and long purple jackets. Both had beards and an important air, both wore skull-caps with red tassels, each was smoking a Dutch pipe of an antique design. Sitting down comfortably side by side on the warm top step, they raised their faces to the sun and remained motionless, only a puff of smoke coming from the mouth and beard of each in turn.

The smoke drifted towards her, and with it, a strange sweet

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smell of the south, of the tropics. She stayed in hiding, her breathing deep and fast, while the air trembled and shimmered around her and a soft rustling came from every side as lumps of snow fell from the firs and pines.

Abruptly the trolls got up and with a businesslike air, one after the other, walked across the blue snow towards the willows. There they spent a long time sniffing at something and digging up small roots and bringing them close to their eyes to examine them. Then they wiped their hands and began to play, pelting each other with furry willow buds, moving at an unhurried, dignified pace, their pipes still in their mouths and their expressions pensively important. When they had had enough they strolled back to the porch, climbed the ladder to the window and pulled it in after them. The window slammed shut and once again the house looked uninhabited.

Scarcely breathing, giddy with the sunshine and the smoke from the trolls' pipes, the girl went home, quiet and tight-lipped, afraid above all of someone guessing from her expression that something had happened to her and questioning her, trying to find out... All that day she was not herself, there was a wild look in her eyes, she was tormented by doubts, no longer believing what she had seen and hardly able to wait for the night.

And when the night fell, she lay down in her clothes and thought about the trolls. She couldn't sleep, her head was on fire and her lips were dry and cracked. The church clock chimed, the house was silent, but it seemed to her that someone was walking about the rooms, peering through the windows, touching the piano keys in the drawing room.

Exhausted by excitement, fears and fevers of delight, she got up, held her breath to listen, looked wildly over her shoulder, went out on the porch and once again, like that first time, was overcome by the stillness, the sharp blue stars and the smell of the snow.

Afraid to look back, she ran breathlessly through the park and out into the street, past the sleeping houses, past the lamp-posts and the shops with shuttered windows. Finally she turned towards the sea, the woods and Antler House.

Now the street lamps were left behind and at once everything around her seemed remote and pale blue, except for the black pines and fir trees which advanced close to the path.

Coming up to Antler House, she rose on tiptoe and peered through the dense shadow of the crowded trees: light was filtering through the shuttered windows. As in a dream she

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followed the fence until she came to the broken planks and crawled through. After taking a few big strides along the path trodden by the dogs, she turned and made straight for the house. The hard, grained snow crunched underfoot with a crisp, muffled sound as of a water-melon being cut.

Near the house, she stopped. There must be a fire inside, for a clear wisp of smoke rose from the chimney and faint shadows played on the snow. She heard a flute and some stringed instruments which were unknown to her. The tender, hollow notes of the flute and the slightly muffled chords plucked from the strings were singing a slow, graceful, old-fashioned melody. It was the very music she had dreamed of! Everything about her airy, ghostly dreams came back to her—how she had flown from hill to hill and, taking off again, glided through the air between the pines, through smoking shafts of moonlight, while an inhumanly lovely music played and played... Who could it be, playing it now?

Coming up still closer to the house, she saw through the slats of the shutters a trembling saffron light and misshapen shadows moving on the ceiling. She came closer still.

The logs in the great fireplace flamed like rubies; a table, as rough and clumsy as the tall chairs around it, stood in the middle of the room. On it were pewter mugs, round cheeses and a small wine cask. Sitting at it were the trolls. There were many of them, all bearded, all comically grave and pompous; they were eating, drinking, playing cards and smoking. Others, their expressions equally important, sat on stumps beside the fire. The oldest of them had pulled his cap over his eyes and, turned sideways, his wrists bent sharply, he was playing the flute. The rest were gravely, sadly plucking at the strings of instruments which looked something like lutes. Only the faces of the dancers showed a little animation. They were dancing an old-fashioned dance, with smooth and rounded gestures and respectful, elegant bows. The room was full of smoke and lit by slim pink candles in copper candlesticks. What can it all mean? the girl wondered. What is this enchanted house? And what would happen if I went in?

She moved away from the window, climbed the steps and touched the door. To her surprise, the door gave, the music grew louder and clearer, as if the house itself were playing it, its ancient timbers singing.

She crossed the veranda with its coloured window panes, felt her way along a passage and shyly pushed open the door of the room where the trolls were playing and dancing. At once

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the fire died down, the music broke off, trembling in mid-air the dancers came to a halt. The trolls looked at her, their eyes menacing and wild. She wanted to speak to them, to say something beautiful and friendly; she moved her lips, unable to bring out a sound. But her eyes sparkled, her face was flushed with joy, curiosity and shyness, everything in her was going out to them, and they at once relaxed.

All the same, the privacy of their lives had been violated: they got up, cleared the table, picked up the cards, opened a trap door, put out the candles and the fire and, one by one, each with a bow to their unexpected guest, went underground.

Now, only one remained, the oldest, the most pompous and the most misshapen, the one who had played the flute; and she looked at him questioningly, pleadingly, waiting for what he would say. But he said nothing. Following the others, the one remaining candle in his hand, he began to go down, but at the last moment turned and fixed his eyes on her. There was a hidden kindness in his look, the promise of something beautiful, something extraordinary. He was telling her something by the expression of his wise, thousand-year-old face, out of his prophetic knowledge of the sorrows and joys of life, but she couldn't understand him and it hurt her. He gave her a portentous nod and slammed the trap door shut above him.

With difficulty she found her way through the darkness to the porch and sat down on the steps. Her cheeks were burning, her heart was thumping. Why didn't he say anything? she wondered bitterly. But of course! They can't talk to us...

Suddenly she felt a presence behind her and, turning, saw him once again. He was again looking at her with a thoughtful benevolence and now, in the moonlight, his face was even more portentous and mysterious, wise and prophetic. Yet he was so small and frail that she longed to stroke his beard and straighten his cap for him. Nodding to her silently, he jumped down from step to step, then turned and gestured her to follow. She got up and obediently went down. He led her to the shuttered window through which she had seen the trolls, and pointed at it. Tense with presentiment, she looked through the slats.

Instead of the room, she was seeing the hills and the pine woods on a sunny day, and the skier flying soundlessly from hill to hill. She could see his flushed, determined face, his strong, thin body, and the bold swing of the poles as he flung the skis far forward at every stroke.

When at length she turned back to the troll he was no longer

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there. Silence and moonlight were all around her; the emerald stars had opened wide their shaggy eyelashes, and the caps of snow were falling off the pines and firs and hanging in mid-air, turned into shafts of moonlit snow dust.

Next day she woke up late, when the sun was already smoking outside the window and lying, divided by the window frame, in pale squares on the floor. Once again the voice of the announcer—"*Rune Riga!*"—and the fresh cold air coming through the vent, the smell of coffee and the warmth in the house struck her as unutterably wonderful. All the morning she hummed to herself and danced, imitating the trolls, in her room, burying her face in her pillow in fits of uncontrollable laughter.

And at noon, unable to wait any longer, she went to Antler House, though afraid to look or even turn her head in its direction. She felt the trolls would lose their tempers with her if they saw her there again. Uncertainly, she brushed the fluffy morning snow off the stump with her scarlet mittens, sat down, took a deep breath and at last looked up.

The house was uninhabited, the shutters closed, the antlers gleaming dully on the wall, the first window shut. There were no trolls. Not even her last night's tracks were there when she looked for them, and her heart dropped with bitter disappointment. Did it mean she hadn't come?

Jumping up, she ran to the fence, climbed in through the hole and, bending over the smooth, dazzling snow, examined it closely, even feeling it with her hands. There was nothing—only the frozen dog tracks leading to the pine.

She went up to the house, walked round it, tried the door, found the window the troll had pointed out, looked for a loose slat—but the shutters were tight and the door boarded up. No tracks anywhere, there had never been any trolls, there had been no music, no candles, no fire . . . And for the first time she felt sick with pain and loneliness, and wept.

The skier came out of the pine woods, rushed headlong down the hill, raising sparkling snow dust, flew up another; and was gliding down it to breast a third and follow the line of the sea, rising and vanishing among the hills.

She knew him at once and hid behind a corner of the house, watching him and still sobbing. She was no longer sure of anything and, when the skier was hidden by the woods, wiped her tears and went to see if he had left any tracks.

Climbing to the top of the hill and collecting snow in her

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boots, she saw the deep, furry tracks of the skis and the small round pits and scribbles left by the ski sticks and, turning in amazement, recognised everything the troll had shown her: the brilliant March day, the pale blue firs on dark green pines, the sea, free at last of ice—and she was filled with joy, she again believed in miracles, in dreams and fairytales. Raising her face, pink and pretty with happiness, stretching her neck and shielding her eyes, their lashes still wet, she shouted "Ay-a-hoy!" and listened in ecstasy to the clear, ringing echo.

Hearing her call of joy and triumph, the skier immediately dug his sticks into the snow and braked. He turned, his face flushed with racing, listened, but could hear nothing more and sharply turned his skis round and raced back along his track.

But she was hidden in the pines, her heart pounding, waiting and listening for an answer—happy, her coat open, her cap as red as the trolls', her thin neck bared, her eyes large and dark in her glowing face.

What answer was she waiting for from the pines, the sea, the springs? Why did she dream of music and why did she fly in her dreams? Why was it so tormentingly important to her to know what the troll would say? Why did she greet each new day with that particular smile and wait for something with such passionate assurance?

And who would find her, who would guess what she was waiting for?

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Translated from the Russian by Manya Harari and Andrew Thomson

This Man Kazakov

He was born in Moscow in 1927, and music was his first choice as a career: he taught music, played in classical orchestras and jazz groups. In his twenties he found his interest in writing developing to such an extent that he abandoned music for short stories, and now he spends his life travelling about Russia, fishing, wandering in the vast forests, sometimes spending months on end in a remote spot – and writing all the time. He is very much part of the new school of non-political Soviet writers, and has been critically described as "the truest talent yet to emerge from the current Soviet renaissance." Argosy first published him last January, and the first collection of his stories in English, *The Smell of Bread* (published by Harvill Press), has had an enthusiastic reception from the critics. Argosy has secured the rights to more of Kazakov's stories, which will be published in the months to come

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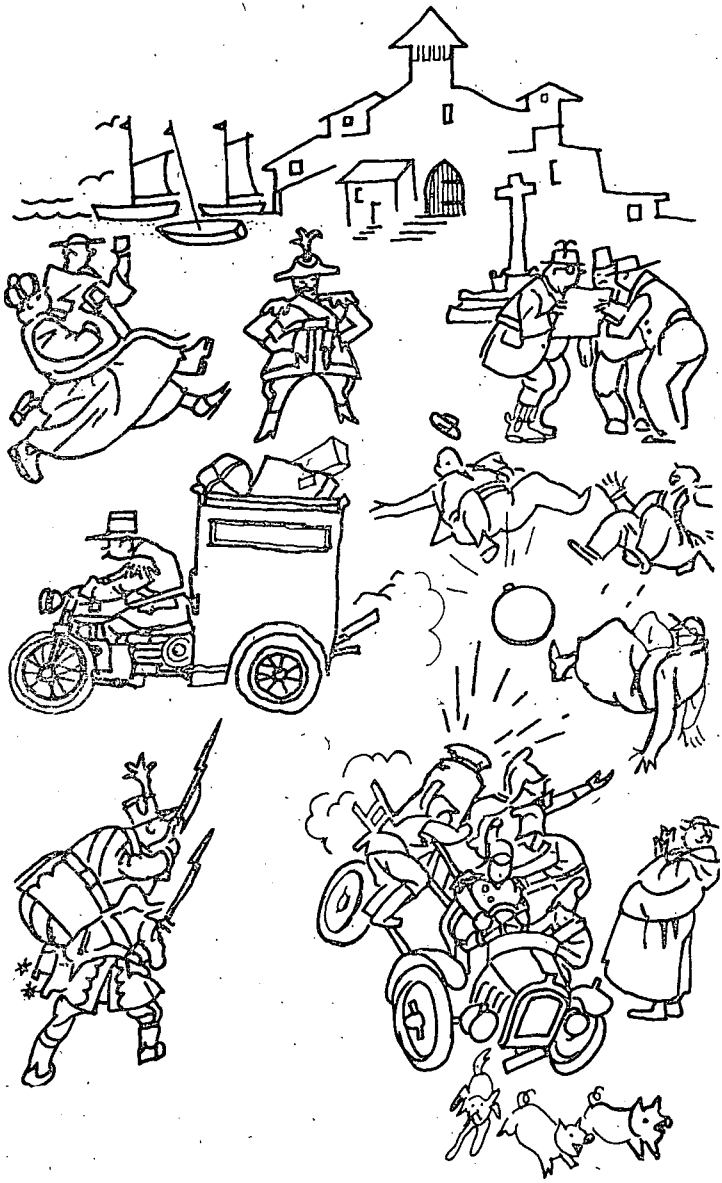

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GEOFFREY HOUSEHOLD

No Police in the Cemetery

THE return of the Conde de Villanueva to his ancestral home had not been as gay and pleasurable as he expected. In his little town of Lazalaya, in the sun-striped Café Moderno to which he had looked forward through months of darkened New York bars, even in the office of the Mayor who had always treated him with a fatherly affection in which there was no room for formal respect, he had been received with cold courtesy. Added to that, there was upon his desk a note from the Civil Governor of the Province demanding his immediate presence.

He really couldn't blame them. The price offered by a Hamburg tourist agency for a strip of his foreshore had so pleasantly surprised him that he cabled his acceptance and signed the documents without remembering his own romantic view of geography. His education had left him permanently muddled between the points of the compass. Eagerly following in his school books the westward track of the *conquistadóres,* the Pacific, the Philippines and even India appeared to him obviously west of Spain, the world east of Spain stopping somewhere about the Persian Gulf. His mental block was a mere question of semantics and impossible to refute; but on the dry land of a surveyor it was a nuisance, a disease, a curse. He believed that he had sold the eastern headland when he had actually sold the western.

The mistake hurt his pride—not his ancestral pride which hardly existed, but his self-respect as an enterprising young business man with a taste for public relations. And he was appalled to find how irrevocably his error had grown. The

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foundations of a luxury hotel and the terracing of the approach road were already recognisable on the headland. The walls of a single-storied service wing—staff quarters, laundry, store-rooms and garage—were awaiting the roof. Bustling about the whole disaster with Teutonic efficiency was the able Herr Carl Kuchler who had chosen the site and would be ready within a year to receive the hotel coaches full of citron-blooming compatriots impatient to toast their white navels and patronise the Mediterranean.

On his third day home Gil de Villanueva obeyed the summons of the Civil Governor. Official displeasure was easier to face than all those unofficial silences. He drove to the provincial capital and parked his car with a final cavalier gesture in the space reserved for the Governor himself.

The Palace restored his faith in himself and his society. It was entirely unfitted for the enlightened, modern administration of a province. The Ministry of the Interior wished, he knew, to build a glass-and-concrete block of government offices, whereupon the Ministry of Tourism, always eager to turn the useless and beautiful into a superb hotel, would have gladly taken over the Palace. But nobody—thank God!—had yet the heart to change its traditional function.

This treasure of Spanish baroque, its crumbling yellow stone combining elegance with power, had even affected the Governor's appearance. The distinguished twentieth-century lawyer, who had never been gravely disturbed if some remains of his lunch were visible on his waistcoat in the afternoon, was now all courtly and fastidious. He wore the same perfectly cut black suits that he had always worn, but he treated the cloth as if it were lace and black velvet. He had suppressed the grey-and-black moustache which gave him a certain air of authority in the clubs and cafés of Madrid, and now showed an austere and scholarly upper lip. When he was annoyed—and at the moment he was very annoyed indeed—the lip was as long as if it had been painted by El Greco.

He frowned upon the young man, the far too self-satisfied young man, sitting opposite his tremendous desk of olive wood and mahogany. Both were dwarfed by the sheer space of the Governor's office and its lofty stone walls hung with tapestries and pictures, some of them in place since the reign of Philip III, some lent by the paternal state.

"As a grandee of Spain you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" Don Baltasar announced. "Because of your continued absence from your estates, irresponsible attorneys have been

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able to sell to a speculator the land promised by your father to the Municipality of Lazalaya."

"Nobody could regret it more than I do, Excellency. If your colleagues of the Law—excuse me, your former colleagues—could ever draw up a conveyance making it clear exactly what one is selling, it wouldn't have happened."

The Count appeared completely unimpressed by his surroundings. The casual air of good breeding, which he could no more help than his distinctively Spanish narrow face and slim physique, contained neither disrespect nor undue reverence. He was in fact thinking that the grave magnificence framing Don Baltasar would have suited his own tastes and appearance a great deal better; it was a pity that he could not consider the arts of government as anything but a joke.

"I am prepared to grant that under the influence of feminine and other distractions you did not read the conveyance with due care," said the Civil Governor severely. "But what you have done is to allow a lousy German tourist agent to put up a hotel where the Municipality proposed to build a mole and a fish market whenever they could raise the capital. You, the Conde de Villanueva, have broken a contract!"

"There was nothing in writing, was there?"

"In dealing with your father it was not necessary to put anything in writing. And he was not, I will again impress on you, an absentee landlord."

"Your Excellency talks as if we still owned half the province instead of just a farm at Lazalaya."

"The principle is the same."

"With respect, it is not the same. My father fed and educated his family by running a small estate with extreme efficiency. Myself, I am a disaster as a farmer. So I leave the management to a bailiff and meanwhile sell sherry in New York, thereby adding to the country's exports. And I refuse to be called an absentee landlord." Gil went on, adding a calculated warmth to his defence. "If I am, why don't you people expropriate me? Exactly! Because it isn't worth the trouble for four hundred hectares of land upon which, I may point out, the labourers are known to be well-paid, happy, well-housed—and no monkey business with the social security. I also remind you that on my last visit I was publicly congratulated by the local Syndicate of Agricultural Workers."

"They were all as drunk as owls," replied the Civil Governor, "and so were you."

"The ancient democracy of Spain..."

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"I can do without a lecture on politics. The point is you sold it."

"Your Excellency should not have allowed it."

"I wasn't asked. It all went through the Ministry of Tourism."

"Lack of liaison. I shall complain to the Chief of State through my Syndicate."

"You haven't got a Syndicate."

"I have. Employees of the Wine Industry. And if it hasn't enough nuisance value, I'll stand for the Municipality of Lazalaya. I'm sure to be elected, however much you try to cook the returns."

"I do not cook returns."

"And Your Excellency will find himself governing Guinea with only two retired generals for company."

"I tell you I never had a chance to intervene," Don Baltasar insisted, picking up a symbolic file and slapping it with his other hand.

"I accept your word. I am glad you have the decency to apologise."

"It is not an apology."

"Well, it sounded like one. Am I, once and for all, an absentee landlord?"

"In spirit, no."

"That will do, Excellency. I am now prepared to help."

"I wish you would stop calling me Excellency."

"You started it, my dear Uncle, by addressing me as Conde de Villanueva. The least I expected was exile and a fine."

"You know very well, Gil, that my powers are limited."

"To whatever you can get away with. Why don't you compel this Kuchler to sell the land back to the Municipality?"

"Because I can't and should be sacked if I tried. I must remind you that it is deliberate Government policy, executed in practice by the Ministry of Tourism, to turn Spain into a holiday camp for all Europe. Foreign exchange, the family, employment . . ."

"I don't see all the males of Lazalaya becoming waiters."

"Nor do I! Nor do I," said the Civil Governor, making the considerable circuit of his desk and putting an arm round the shoulders of his nephew. "All I can suggest is that you show a sense of responsibility in future, and by active co-operation with your decent fellow citizens, endeavour to revive in them some respect for the family. I need not say that I am entirely at the disposition of the Municipality of Lazalaya."

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Gil de Villanueva drove slowly back along the excellent road which was—economically speaking—the cause of all the trouble. It had been built by his grandfather in the days of family prosperity, and for a long generation had been used only by mule carts and the Villanueva automobile. Lazalaya had never had any reason for existence except that it existed.

The road and the rapid increase of fast and efficient transport had at last suggested that the town ought to be originating traffic rather than receiving it at a dead end. Fish was the answer—an imaginative answer, since Lazalaya had always ignored the sea. The coast was grim and rocky without a sheltered anchorage. Still, only two miles away, there was a shallow cove where a small and active community of inshore fishermen worked their rowing boats from a semicircular beach, and supplied by donkey and pack-basket the town and its surrounding villages. Given a breakwater of a hundred metres to protect the cove from the prevailing south-easterly winds, Lazalaya could become the only fishing port on a long, inhospitable shore.

Civil war had prevented the development; then lack of capital. Neither Lazalaya nor the Villanuevas had any money. The central and provincial governments were fully occupied by more essential schemes. Meanwhile the road had attracted Herr Kuchler and a few adventurous tourists—at any rate to the extent that it was now safer to ride a donkey on the right rather than down the middle.

Gil de Villanueva stopped and got out on the crest of the low range which separated the narrow coastal plain from the endless inland miles of scrub and poor cornland. In his own territory he felt a car to be a confinement of the spirit; he preferred the old-fashioned view from the back of a horse.

Below him to his right—west, damn it!—was the compact little town, its lack of any brick or concrete suburbs revealing that it had not the least excuse for growth. To his left was the great, green oblong of the Villanueva farm, separated from the prevailing yellows of the countryside by a plastered stone wall—an extravagantly expensive method of fencing which dated from the time when labour cost little. The fertility within the wall reminded him of his father who had created it. And that unpleasantly emphasised what his father would have thought of him.

A remarkable vehicle was pounding unconcernedly up the hairpin bends of the road. The front of it was a twin-engined

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motor-cycle with its handlebars enclosed in a cabin; the back was that of a small van. It belonged to the Mayor, and had indeed been built by him in his own workshop. Since he was the smith, coachbuilder and wheelwright of Lazalaya and described himself as an engineer, it was a striking advertisement for his crafts. Forged iron and sound timber made it indestructible, and on such a hill would probably have made it immovable if not for an additional gear of three massive cogs and shafts. Even so, the steady climbing was mysterious, for the home-made first gear must have weighed nearly as much as the engine.

Gil's first instinct was to turn round and escape the meeting. He was humiliated to think that the Mayor might not even stop to talk. But such cowardice would not do, really would not do. So he placed his own car more or less in the middle of the road, and himself posed sadly and romantically upon a roadside rock.

Don Jaime Caruncho halted his shuddering chimera, and at least exchanged compliments.

"And what are you thinking about up there?" he asked. "Lunch?"

"Far from it, Jaime. I am recovering from an interview with the Civil Governor."

"What was His Excellency's opinion?"

"Of me?"

"That I can guess. Of what should be done."

"Civil Governors, my dear Jaime, only think what they think they ought to think. That is why they are appointed. All I can tell you is that he would rather have fish than a hotel."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Of course. He drew himself up to his full width and ordered me to co-operate with decent people."

"Then I will try to find a use for you."

"Anything you like," said Gil, joining the Mayor in the road and absent-mindedly patting the Vehicle. "Where are you going?"

"To buy a second-hand dynamo."

"Second-hand dynamos don't work."

"They do when I have repaired them."

"If I were to accompany you in the back of the van . . ."

"No. For the time being we should continue to appear on the worst possible terms."

"How right you are, Jaime! The strength of you natural

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leaders is in the instinctive reactions which allow you time to think."

"Enough compliments! Do you agree with us that this hotel will be a disaster for the morals of Lazalaya?"

Gil did not. He thought that both the influence and the economic effects of the hotel would be excellent. But what mattered was the site for the long-promised breakwater.

"Jaime, I always accept expert opinion," he answered cautiously. "This Kuchler, however, is a heretic and will not."

"He must answer to God for it. Meanwhile you can ask him to dinner."

"What do you want me to say?"

"Nothing! Nothing! Just to look mysterious if he asks your opinion on some curiosities that I have told him. He is very interested in the atrocious past of Lazalaya, and it seems to me that he is too sure of the future. Some of those exaggerations you loose off when you have been drinking would do no harm."

"Anything else?"

"We will see how it goes. Well, I'm off. On your way back take a look at the house in the *Travesía de San Bartolomeo* where Kuchler is staying. Something may occur to you."

When he reached Lazalaya, Gil walked slowly through the *Travesía*. Nothing whatever occurred to him, except that Jaime would never take action without the approval of his friends, the priests. He was a conservative of conservatives, an ardent and practising churchman and above suspicion. Reliability without speed. The Vehicle was a true expression of his character—though it might be as well to remember that within his workshop Jaime was ruthless with his materials.

The *Travesía* was a long, narrow alley behind the church, with half-abandoned warehouses on one side and a high wall, which had once enclosed a nunnery, on the other. The only two houses were Father Miguel's, next to the church, and a venerable, crumbling mansion nearly opposite, of which Herr Kuchler had taken the second floor. The alley was private enough for anything, even for Kuchler's assassination—though that could hardly have entered into the calculations of Jaime and the *cofradía* of the Friends of San Bartolomeo who probably represented as well as anyone the "decent people" referred to by his uncle.

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Feeling more obscured by ecclesiastical shadows than an experienced Villanueva ought to feel, he dropped a note on Kuchler asking him to dinner the following day.

As yet he had only talked to the speculator at the hotel site or on the beach, reluctant to join him in the Café Moderno and be received by its customers with an elaborate politeness which really hurt. Kuchler, no doubt, would have ascribed it to respect for an ancient family. In his determination not to put a foot wrong in Spain he took social rank too seriously. That was the only reason why Gil had not already offered hospitality; Kuchler would be disappointed that it was so easily come by.

The German was extremely presentable, arriving with his white dinner jacket and formal air. A well-preserved man in his late forties, with china-blue eyes in a smooth face of even tan, he was straight off the cover of a magazine for elder citizens—if there was such a thing. He turned out to be a likeable guest, and would have been even more so if he had not been so anxious to be liked.

Passion was the only word for Kuchler's admiration of Spain and its people. Gil was reminded of an unfortunate friend of his who had been determined to marry a gipsy singer and was always making excuses or denying that any need for excuses existed. He suspected that Kuchler knew the country chiefly from books, though speaking excellent Castilian. He was too slow to appreciate the dancing of light and shade.

"I hope, Count, that you are content with our deal?" Kuchler asked at last.

"Very, my dear fellow, very! When I think of the bars..."

"And I intend to pay particular attention to the restaurant."

"The little bikinis!" Gil exclaimed.

"Ha! Ha!"

"And the intriguing possibilities of my house!"

"You will invite me, I hope."

"Of course! Of course!" Gil replied, and then remembered that he was under orders.

The revolutionary past of Lazalaya had not been notably atrocious, except in Jaime's eyes. Still, over the years there had been quite enough incidents for brandy and imagination to work on.

"If I can," he added. "It is such a pity that for us the sincerity of political opinions can only be proved by violence."

"But all is very calm," Kuchler insisted. "In the north and

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in the universities I know there are pockets of discontent. But here is old Spain! The true, old, Catholic Spain!"

"Yes, we haven't changed much."

"So wonderful in our era! So uniquely restful!"

"And always so predictable. Do you know that this house has been burnt down four times since 1800?"

"But by whom?" Kuchler asked, much shocked.

"Usually Lazalaya. We deserved what was coming to us, except the accompanying rape," said Gil, warming to his task. "And my father used to tell me that from what he remembered of his great-aunts they deserved that, too."

"But rape!"

"We can always have bikinis prohibited. That won't keep people away if the food is good enough."

"Surely Lazalaya does not object to the hotel?" Kuchler asked. "There was, I believe, some project for a mole."

"Oh, that! They've been talking about that since 1930. Your hotel will make more money for them than sardines. And prosperity for everyone is bound to reduce the crime statistics."

"There is no crime! My partner and I consulted our Embassy and the provincial Chief of Security."

Gil had to admit that there were very few arrests. He tried to make his tone regretful.

Herr Kuchler fidgeted with his bow-tie and finished his brandy with a decisive gulp.

"I was talking to Don Jaime Caruncho a few days ago," he said. "He asked me if I had ever visited the cemetery."

"And have you?"

"Casually. In passing. And then he put a most curious question: had I ever noticed that no police were buried there?"

"Oh, I see."

"He seemed unwilling to tell me any more, and suggested that I should ask you."

"Ask me what?" Gil replied, his mind racing for some answer which would satisfy Jaime and yet be non-committal.

"Why there are no police in the cemetery."

"Well, they aren't buried there."

"Where are they buried?"

"Who knows, my dear Carl, who knows? I will ask you a question in my turn. Have you ever seen a dead donkey?"

"No. No, I don't believe I have."

"Think it over! You are an intelligent man."

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Kuchler's thanks were impenetrable. When he got into his car to drive back to Lazalaya, he certainly seemed graver than he should have been after a Villanueva dinner; but Gil doubted if this able and active German was likely to be at all impressed at breakfast time in the *Travesía de San Bartolomeo.* Jaime Caruncho's dark hints were childish.

He strolled with a last cigar on the terrace of his house. Faint specks of lanterns showed at sea where the little boats had their lines out for bream. Lazalaya was a soft pattern of light, composed of faint pools rather than bright points. The only intrusion of modernity was the sudden plunge of a newly-bought heifer as her nose touched the electric fence which limited the dairy herd's supper of lucerne.

Gil's peace of mind, already insecure between amusement and misgivings, had barely recovered from the start, when there was a second plunge from the pomegranate grove below him.

"How did it go?" asked the Mayor.

"Jaime, I wish you would arrive by the front door. And such impatience is undignified."

"We technicians have no time for dignity."

"But for a little refreshment, I hope."

"Here outside the house, if you like."

Gil, returning from the dining room with glasses and a bottle, determined to re-impose his authority. It was futile for Lazalaya, a town of four thousand inhabitants without any noticeable capital among the lot, to oppose a sound project conceived in Hamburg and approved by the Ministry of Tourism.

"Look, old friend! Forgive me if I say that you do not know the world outside Spain! When a speculator such as Kuchler has made so large an investment, he is not easily frightened out of it—if, as I suspect, that's your intention."

"We will see. Tell me—what are his politics?"

"He seems to me much like an American. He gives political names to his decency and good will, and has no interest in definition."

"But it is said he was a Nazi," Jaime replied.

"Almost inevitable in a man of his age."

"Well, it counts. He was brought up to violence."

"So were you," Gil retorted, for the Mayor had been a twice-decorated sergeant-major in the crusade against the infidel Republic.

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"That is why I understand him. He has a natural distrust of the Left."

"Jaime, you are not to involve them! They'd go to gaol."

"What do you think of me?" the Mayor exclaimed indignantly. "Whatever their misguided past, they are now my fellow citizens. I shall ensure that they all have alibis."

"When? What for?"

"Father Miguel will explain to you. Go and see him tomorrow."

Ridiculous, but at least harmless, Gil thought as he rode into Lazalaya the following day. His only touch of aristocratic pride was in his attitude to the Church. Since it was essential to the State, it must always be able to count on Villanueva support. As for parish priests, one entertained them; one had profound respect for their office; but one was not bound to have any for their opinions.

Father Miguel always reminded him of an obscure traffic signal. His cheek-bones were red, and so was the tip of his pointed nose. They formed a triangle under the black line of his eyebrows. He was cordial enough—and he damned well should be—but the parochial chair was uncomfortable and the interview unsatisfactory. Jaime seemed to have been misinformed, or else Father Miguel's system of approach bidding was very cautious. He was pretending to see no harm in the hotel.

"I fear it is likely to bring in disturbing modern influences, Padre," Gil remarked gravely.

"That is nothing new for the Church, my son."

"Well, no. Of course not. Still, I can imagine..."

"Sometimes fact is more healthy than imagination."

"I was only thinking that if we are to make out a case..."

"The Ministry of Tourism has the full approval of the Church. It is not for me, a humble parish priest, to question national policy."

"But I understood you would rather have an honest little port and a fishmarket! What about St. Peter?"

"I cannot feel that he would have objected to a well-run inn."

"Roman orgies, Padre?"

"I am unable to decide how much you hope, my son, and how much you fear. So far as I know the hotel will be primarily for respectable families from northern Europe."

This was getting nowhere. It was hardly worth bringing

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up the question of female exposure. The wily old fox was quite capable of pointing out that nothing was more likely to impress on Lazalaya the vanity of the flesh than respectable wives in bikinis.

"I can well see that you wish to undo the results of a moment of carelessness," Father Miguel went on. "But even if this worthy Kuchler could be persuaded to abandon the project, even if you were able to repay him his money, which —forgive me if I am misinformed—you cannot do, how is the Municipality to raise the capital for a mole and a fish-market?"

"Well, we could always try the banks or float a company. We should have the foundations. That's an asset. And since the fishmarket would not be so big as the hotel, we can sell what's over."

"To whom?"

"A canning factory, for example."

"There is not enough space."

"Well, a villa then."

"Would you wish to live on top of a fishmarket?"

"You're being very difficult, Padre."

"I am perhaps inexperienced, my son. And has it occurred to you that the walls of the service wing are three metres high already? Your company would have all the expense of pulling them down, and I doubt if the Ministry of Tourism would allow it. Our little town is powerless to oppose the Government."

"I told Jaime that."

"If only the site were in the centre of a business district!" Father Miguel rambled on. "I hear that a constructor of office buildings has made an offer to the Little Brothers of St. Macario for their convent in Tarragona. The price will enable them very materially to extend their good works."

"Then they had better take it," said Gil impatiently.

He was exasperated. It was typical of these parish priests to take refuge in milk-and-vinegar neutralism and start blathering about Little Brothers.

"They would indeed if they could find a simple priory. The roof they would build with their own bare hands."

"I'd suggest some fairly heavy gloves."

"It would be well within their capacities to complete the service wing. In California, I am told, missions are turned into hotels. I see no reason why here we should not turn a hotel into a mission."

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"And a lot of use that would be to Lazalaya! I mean, no doubt the town would profit spiritually, but..."

"If the Little Brothers had the hotel garden and the wing," replied Father Miguel gently, "I cannot believe they would object to the excellent investment of building and owning a fishmarket. That leaves us only with the problem of financing the mole. No doubt the Little Brothers would assist, especially if the Provincial Government, under its present enlightened administration, were to give a grant."

"It's possible. But something on paper..." Gil began.

"Indeed something on paper! With a little compass, perhaps, on the map? For example: that if for any unknown cause the building of the hotel is abandoned and the site with existing improvements offered back to you, the Little Brothers would lend you the money, you on your part giving them a lien on the property at cost, and they on their part undertaking to build a fishmarket with all necessary approaches and customary amenities and to lease the same to the Municipality on condition that the Municipality, whom I believe we should call the Party of the Third Part, undertake to build a mole and a quay."

For a moment Gil could find no reply, feeling that astonishment at the extreme competence of the Church would be rude and congratulations out of place. Eventually he mumbled that they would have to keep the deal pretty quiet.

"Publicity is always to be deprecated, my son. You may count, I assure you, on the discretion of the legal advisers to the Church. Now, since you appear to agree, let me hear your proposal, always remembering that I cannot run very fast."

"Padre, I have no proposal whatever!"

"I understand from Don Jaime that you suggest I should allow a party of revolutionaries to chase me down the *Travesía*."

"I know absolutely nothing about it," Gil protested excitably.

"Let me put your conscience at rest! I see no sacrilege in so good a cause, especially since this regrettable scene will be organised by the *Cofradía de San Bartolomeo*. All that will be asked of you personally is to keep your uncle informed —without in any way compromising him of course—so that in case of need he may, as the saying is, hold the ring."

"He'll shove me up before a military court if he thinks I'm responsible!"

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"Surely not! Surely not! He will rejoice that a grandee of Spain should stick at nothing to undo the results of an accidental breach of faith. And in any case the Little Brothers will see that the Bishop has a word with him. God be with you, my worthy son!"

Back in the calm of the far too empty ancestral home, Gil realised that if anything went wrong the sacrifice had been already chosen. The scapegoat would be the irresponsible young man who had sold the headland, who didn't go to church if he could help it; who approved of impropriety on beaches; who could buy an air passage one jump ahead of the police. There was no way out but ignominious flight. And that wouldn't do at all. Some time in the future—when a rich wife came along or America doubled its consumption of sherry—Lazalaya would again be his permanent home; and home, if it meant anything, meant the liking and trust of his fellow citizens from top to bottom.

In the evening the Vehicle rumbled openly up the drive to the house.

That at least was a welcome sign.

"I thought we had agreed to keep our distance," said Gil cautiously, after he had led the Mayor into his study and shut the door.

"That doesn't matter any longer now that all the decent people know you are doing your best."

"Well, you can go straight back and tell them that I will not chase Father Miguel down the *Travesía de San Bartolomeo.*"

"Nothing of that for you! All that's needed is for you to be with Kuchler in his dining room which overlooks the street. Have you got a pistol?"

"No and no! And I don't want one."

"Well, take this!" said the Mayor, handing over a neat Star automatic.

"What for?"

"Just to take a few shots at us when we pass Kuchler's flat."

"I might easily hit you."

"What about all the prizes you won for pigeon shooting?"

"One does not use a pistol," Gil shouted.

"The principle is the same."

"Kuchler will get suspicious."

"On the contrary! He will be convinced. You are an excitable young man of good family defending the Church.

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It is not necessary to know the difference between east and west at short range."

"Anything else?" Gil asked, accepting his fate.

"Yes. It's fixed for the 17th."

"Why?"

"No moon. And I can arrange for Alonso Mejías and Enrique Jimenez to be on duty at the bottom of the *Travesía*."

"Can't you find someone more intelligent?" Gil asked, for the two venerable constables had piously dreamed their way through thirty years of Lazalaya's civic and ecclesiastical life. "They are just a pair of unfortunates."

"That is because their minds are not set on things of this world, Gil," said the Mayor rebukingly. "They see nothing. They are still incapable of holding up a bicycle with one hand while beckoning on my Vehicle with the other."

"Suppose Kuchler can't have me to dinner on the 17th?"

"Of course he can! What has he to do except walk round his headland learning filthy language from the builders? Good! And try to look more cheerful in public!"

By enlisting the aid of Kuchler's venerable cook who had learned her job in the Villanueva kitchens, Gil managed to force the invitation with complete naturalness. She had only to mention that a dish of sea bream, stuffed with garlic, had been a favourite of the *señorito*. Kuchler, bored by his usual lonely meals, was on the telephone at once and accepted the date of the 17th.

A more formal dinner, he said, must come later, and meanwhile this would be a memorable occasion.

Memorable it certainly was. Gil tried hard to be a satisfactory guest, though feverishly mopping up his sauce, talking too fast and probably drinking too much. The more he looked at the repercussions of this scandal, the more nervous he was. Everyone else was safe. The veterans of the Republican Army, the former anarchists, Communists and plain Democrats, were all sitting comfortably in their accustomed Café Ventura under the eyes of the town. The members of the *Cofradía de San Bartolomeo* were above suspicion. Nobody would ever enquire where they were.

Gil surreptitiously watched the ancient wall clock behind Kuchler's head. It formally struck eleven at ten minutes to the hour. His own watch said it was five past. But the time by Jaime's immense silver pocket watch, mended and improved by himself, was the only time of importance. He wondered how in the Civil War, Spaniards ever managed to synchronise

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an attack. Whose watch? What check on it? And then at last came the flash and the formidable explosion.

"What the devil was that?" Kuchler exclaimed, rushing to the window.

Gil nearly answered that it was sugar and weed-killer. He hadn't believed it could possibly be so effective. But trust Jaime! He probably used it for testing the springs of the Vehicle.

Father Miguel shot out of the vestry door and down the *Travesía*, shouting for help. Simultaneously the north end of the church glowed red behind the high wall as a pile of paraffin-soaked rafters from the former nunnery flared and crackled.

Hot on the heels of Father Miguel raced six men, collars turned up, faces indistinguishable in the darkness. Gil threw open the window, drew his pistol and sprayed the nunnery wall, hoping that one shot at least had gone reasonably close to the figure which he took to be Jaime. The flying shadows were seen for a moment down the street against the glow of light from the *Pláza*, and disappeared.

"The church is burning," Kuchler shouted, rushing for the door. "We must help."

"I shouldn't if I were you. These things happen from time to time. One ignores them."

"But you fired! A little high, if you permit an old soldier to say so."

"I think I hit one. We keep the peace ourselves in Lazalaya. The honour of the town demands it."

"Where are the police?"

"The police know better than to interfere, my dear Carl. I believe Don Jaime told you that ... well ... they sometimes disappear. May I perhaps have another brandy?"

The only thing which could appear suspicious to anyone who knew Lazalaya was the speed with which the fire engine arrived. Since Jaime Caruncho ran the fire brigade as well as the town, that was not surprising. Near the far end of the *Travesía* was a small turning to the left which led to the fire station. The conspirators had evidently taken refuge there. Those who were volunteer fire-fighters had then dragged out the engine; those who were not had quietly mixed with the excited crowd coming up from the *Pláza*.

Father Miguel's very discreet movements were beyond guessing.

"It is my duty to report what we saw," Kuchler insisted.

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"Just to the Mayor, perhaps. We can trust him to be discreet. Lazalaya does not want to lose the hotel."

"They are going the right way to do it!" Kuchler exclaimed indignantly. "But of course, as one of yourselves, I know that I must not take these little outbreaks too seriously. Now shall I tell Don Jaime you fired?"

"So long as you don't tell anyone else. These people, you understand, might visit me and turn out better shots than I am."

"But suppose, my dear Count, that they think it was I who shot at them?"

"Oh, they wouldn't mind that! Just a German doing his duty, they would say. They'd know there was no ill-feeling behind it."

Kuchler, next day upon his building site, looked charged with secrets, but there was nothing in that to draw attention to him since all the citizens of Lazalaya were equally distraught. Their animation was insistent, though expressed in voices more muted than usual. Any person of some education was as ashamed to be ignorant of what had happened as any leader of a larger community forced to admit that he hadn't read the newspapers for a week. Inside information, as a matter of prestige, had to be freely invented.

Father Miguel, as befitted his cloth, did not tell a single lie. He had heard an explosion, seen flames and had run for help. When it was discovered that nothing more than a pile of old rafters had caught fire, he was much relieved. Shots? No, he was quite sure that nobody had shot at him. Perhaps people had heard the crackling of the fire. He was no scientist, but could not everything be explained by spontaneous combustion?

Don Jaime massively recommended calm; and the town police, who had not a clue to the culprits—for their only representatives anywhere near the spot had been Jimenez and Mejías—accepted his ingenious theory that the fire was a distasteful prank of students who considered, it might be, that Lazalaya needed waking up. Alternatively, idle foreigners from the vicious resorts along the coast might be responsible. The fishermen of the cove were persuaded that they had seen mysterious headlights racing up the hill from Lazalaya. The fire, the explosion and the shots, which the whole *Pláza* had heard even if Father Miguel had not, were the only certain facts.

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After a couple of days it was obvious that Kuchler's intentions were unaffected. He took the generous view that, though there might be occasional excitement in Lazalaya, the hotel was too far from it to be involved. Should tourists, as tourists sometimes do, wish to spend their money in the cafés of the town, he was quite sure that they would only be impressed by the unfailing courtesy of the Spaniard to the foreigner. He had some evidence, he said tactfully to Don Jaime, that Lazalaya could control its own affairs without interference, and undoubtedly, for the sake of the hotel, it would.

"He thinks we have declared our independence like Gibraltar," the Mayor announced to Gil. "We have surpassed ourselves!"

"*You* have."

"And who has been bombarding the town with a pistol? I was hit by a flake of plaster from the wall."

"If you were, you wouldn't have known it with all those clothes round your head."

"It was the size of a plate! Look, Gil—what we have to do now is to prove to Kuchler that the authorities take us seriously. The Governor's secretary is in my office."

"What does he want?"

"You."

"I'm busy. Tomorrow. Next week."

"He has come to pick you up and drive you to the Palace. You have to go."

"I warn you—I shall tell Don Baltasar the truth."

"Nothing better!" Jaime replied cheerfully. "He's on our side. You said so. Show some spirit, friend! We're still a long way from the fishmarket."

Well, spirit was the only thing to show, plus some of the blackmail which had been applied to himself. Gil found his uncle in a pose of imperial neutrality, framed by the great room of power, and at once took the offensive.

"You look like Pontius Pilate," he remarked.

"I would remind you that he had no difficulty in dealing with two thieves."

"You have heard then that there has been a bomb in Lazalaya?"

"I have had fifteen security reports, each one more improbable than the last, and I begin to fear that our noble police, like those of other countries, create smoke in order to justify their salaries. I have sent for you to tell me what fire, if any, there really was."

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"A little one—in the old nunnery."

"And you?" Don Baltasar stormed. "You were concerned in this criminal folly?"

"Your Excellency told me to co-operate with my decent fellow citizens."

"My only hope is that we can put it down to agitation by the Left."

"No, you can't. Jaime Caruncho was very careful to see that they all had alibis."

"Well, what the devil am I going to do if this comes to the ears of the Government?"

"Jaime will tell you what to do."

"I am not going to have the Mayor of a collection of insanitary hovels telling the Civil Governor what he is to do! And I remind you that Our Movement would have no objection to sending a grandee of Spain to gaol with a long sentence, and might even welcome the opportunity. I also remind you..."

"If you'd let me explain," Gil interrupted.

"I do not wish to know the details. You can merely tell me this. What interest has the Bishop got in the fishmarket and the mole?"

"I suppose he disapproves of bikinis."

"Nonsense!" Don Baltasar roared. "He's a modernist. And he knows very well that if the Ministry of Tourism says there will be bikinis, bikinis there will be. Our need for Foreign Exchange..."

"The Little Brothers of St. Macario also need a priory."

"Would you do me the honour to amplify that statement? Concisely and with respect, both for my intelligence and my office!"

Gil put forward Father Miguel's proposal as confidently as a real-estate operator proposing to pyramid mortgages on a dubious title. The Civil Governor listened with growing calm, perceiving that he was not entirely isolated between the Cabinet and his irresponsible home town.

"I always understood the Little Brothers to be an Order of Poverty," he said severely.

"Perhaps that is why they have some savings."

"And I have no intention of holding the ring, as your Father Miguel puts it. You, Jaime Caruncho and the *Cofradia de San Bartolomeo* will be defenceless before the Ministry. So shall I. I propose to take immediate steps to cover myself and show that I am not a man to be trifled with."

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"I am sure that would be wise, Uncle. As a matter of interest, how far do you control the Civil Guard?"

"Control is a strong word. I indicate my wishes to the Commanding Officer and he takes them into account."

"Then may I suggest that you station a detachment in Lazalaya—just to restore confidence among foreigners?"

"It's the last thing which would restore confidence!"

"Your Excellency understands me perfectly."

"It understands that you are an impertinent young crook! It also impresses on you that It cannot lift a finger to save you, since the Chief of State disapproves of nepotism and It has the misfortune to be your uncle."

"We should only want them a few days. And tell them to behave themselves!"

"The discipline of the Civil Guard is impeccable."

"I know it is. But they needn't look quite so grim."

"What are they supposed to be there for?"

"To show the Ministry that you are not a man to be trifled with, my dear Uncle."

Two on the church. Two on Don Jaime's workshop. Four at the entrance to the town. Half a dozen appearing and disappearing around the Town Hall and the *Pláza*. Tourists, if there had been any, would have whispered to each other of the iniquities of a police state, or, alternatively, have wondered from what threat of commotion a benevolent Government was protecting them.

The citizens of Lazalaya were content to shrug their shoulders and speculate on the inanities which the security police must have reported to the Civil Governor. Don Baltasar, they said, ought to have stayed in his district instead of allowing his common sense to be corrupted by thirty years of law-courts and Madrid. Meanwhile the town's life continued imperturbably. In the Café Moderno the Commander of the detachment of invaders occasionally joined Don Jaime and his friends at their accustomed table. In the Café Ventura, turn-over increased by twenty per cent since there were never less than four plain-clothes security police consuming and offering liquor while they listened suspiciously to the old combatants of the Left.

"You'll drive them into revolt, Jaime," Gil said.

"What are you talking about? They're getting more free drinks than they deserve, and have nothing to give away. The only reliable sources in Lazalaya are the Priest and the

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Mayor. And since they too know nothing, there's an end of it!"

"There is always Kuchler. If he tells them about the shots, they'll grill me for a week."

"Kuchler will not be so disloyal to a friend. Besides, he considers you his agent."

"What the hell do you mean?"

"He has organised an Intelligence service. You have to take your hat off to these Germans. The things they think of!"

"Does he pay them?"

"Yes, of course. But you're not in that class. He's got a waiter in the Moderno and another in the Ventura, two fishermen and Alonso Mejías and Enrique Jimenez."

"What on earth can they find to tell Kuchler?" Gil exclaimed.

"What I pass on to them. They can remember it so long as they see Kuchler within a couple of hours. Double agents —that's what the cinema calls them! I have talent, and that's a fact," the Mayor added complacently. "It's all in this head. The *cofradía* need know nothing more, and Father Miguel only a little. On Wednesday Kuchler's partner is coming to visit the hotel site with a newspaper man from Hamburg. I shall manage them with the least possible disturbance to the authorities."

"Jaime, it would break my uncle's heart if he were sent to Africa. He likes being Civil Governor."

"May he enjoy it for many years! The Bishop and I have his interests always in mind."

"I think he'd prefer to look after them himself. Why doesn't Kuchler put off his friends until Lazalaya looks less like a garrison town on a Saturday night?"

"He said they wouldn't know the difference, that they would just assume the town was well policed. Good! So they will call on me at the Town Hall at six o'clock. Nothing formal! Just to talk in private about the hotel!"

"Can I help at all?"

"Well, there's one thing I would ask of you. I have a job I promised to deliver, and I cannot arrive till nearly six. I shall leave the Vehicle in the lane behind the Café Moderno. Would you drive it back to the workshop and join me in my office afterwards? The truth is that the Vehicle is a little old-fashioned, and I would not like this newspaperman to think that the Mayor of Lazalaya cannot afford a Mercedes."

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"Of course. With pleasure."

The request was reasonable, for few of the Mayor's cronies could drive. Still, it seemed to Gil, as he strolled out of the back door of the Moderno a little after six on the Wednesday, that there was really no occasion for Kuchler's party, even if on a conducted tour of the town, to pass down the lane alongside the garbage cans, shrimp heads and vintage lavatories of the café, and no grounds for assuming—unless Kuchler mentioned it—that the Vehicle belonged to the Mayor. However, everyone, even Jaime, had their points of maximum sensitivity.

Lazalaya was sunk in its evening peace. The detachment of the Civil Guard had tactfully removed itself to the courtyard at the back of the Town Hall. On the balcony of the Mayor's office, which overlooked the *Pláza*, a German flag had, as a courtesy, joined the Spanish. It gave a slight air of fiesta—enough at any rate for the respectable clients of the Moderno to be a little hurt that Don Jaime had not arranged a civic reception and free drinks.

Gil entered the Vehicle, looked for the switch, remembered that motor-cycles did not have one and pulled an ornate little door knob of twisted wrought-iron spirals, which replaced the original kick-start. The two cylinders shattered the evening with a succession of appalling backfires. Timing? A stuck valve? He cautiously opened the throttle lever. The result was a devastating explosion, as full and loud as that of a mortar, as the silencer shot off into the gutter. He tried to close the throttle. The lever had jammed. He had to use his pocket-knife to loosen the holding screw. Meanwhile the machine-gun, its crew having recovered from that near miss of the mortar, continued the battle.

The engine did occasionally produce a backfire or two in starting, so that Gil, sweating in the blessed silence, assumed that he hadn't known how to control it. Then at last it occurred to him why that Jesuitical crook of a Mayor had asked him to put away the Vehicle. Round the corner from the *Pláza* bounced the assault car of the Civil Guard, flanked by motor-cycles whose riders leaped off and took cover in the doorways, their sub-machine-guns commanding the lane. Gil left the driving seat with his hands up.

Recognising both the Vehicle and its occupant, the Guards sheepishly gathered round and were joined by the customers of the Moderno, pouring out of the back door.

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"I am sorry," Gil said. "I was trying to make it start."

The sergeant in charge of mechanical transport examined engine and dashboard with professional interest.

"Very original," he remarked. "As I expected, the silencer has fallen off."

"You'll find it down the lane somewhere."

The sergeant recovered the silencer and easily replaced it, since it was attached to the exhaust pipe by a simple screw thread. Gil, watching, realised that Jaime must have given it a mere half turn, and he was pretty sure that it was bigger and more eaten by rust than the usual silencer. The Mayor had calculated his every move in advance and, as likely as not, those of the Civil Guard as well.

The sergeant slung his sub-machine-gun across his chest, entered the Vehicle and pulled the starter. The result was a booming report more menacing than any Gil himself had produced. The thread held, but the rusty end of the silencer flew screaming into the Moderno garbage cans. No-one listening in the Town Hall could have any doubt that a field-gun was now engaged in the local battle. Before the sergeant could close the throttle, the artillery was promptly answered by those intrepid machine-gunners.

The Civil Guard stood by their motor-cycles and the assault car awaiting orders. When on duty they were not supposed to laugh. They regarded the Vehicle with some embarrassment. The call to action was welcome. Far outside and to the east of the town something blew up which was certainly not a mere car engine. The detachment hurtled out of the lane, sirens shrieking, round the *Pláza* and away into open country.

Gil hurried up the lane after them and entered the Town Hall by the side door. Running up the stairs to the Mayor's office, he found Alonso Mejías and Enrique Jimenez, wearing their best uniforms and white gloves, on guard in the anteroom.

They saluted and opened the door of the office.

The Mayor and his party were grouped around the window. Dust on Jaime's knees and on the prominence of his waistcoat suggested that he had flung himself on the floor of the balcony at the outbreak of hostilities. The newspaperman was behind the inadequate protection of the fine white tablecloth on which were drinks and an excellent variety of *tapas*. Kuchler and his partner were sheltered by the stout pillars

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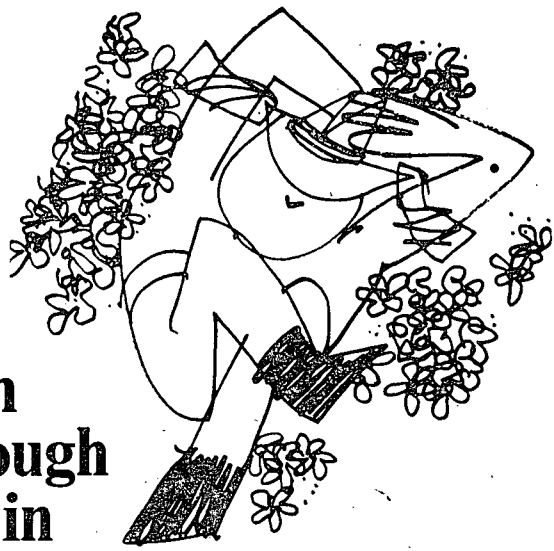

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which framed the window and, as befitted old combatants, still held their glasses.

Over the tumbled red roofs of the town a column of smoke could be seen rising from the Villanueva estate, somewhere near the far angle of the enclosure. The low sun in the west, brilliantly lighting the dark greens on one side of the wall and the rusty scrub on the other, made the mist of dust and smoke in the middle look immense and impenetrable.

Don Jaime sympathetically approached the stricken landowner. "On behalf of the citizens of Lazalaya I offer you my condolences, assuring you, my dear Count, that the damage will be made good just as soon as the Government regains control."

This was the last straw. Jaime must be suffering from the paranoia of power. He couldn't possibly get away with it, however many bishops were in the background. The Vehicle —well, that had been clever. No-one could maintain that the racket had been due to anything but a too individual system of engineering; and, if anyone did, he would hesitate to insist on it for fear of showing up the Civil Guard as impulsive fools. But this outrage would call for the immediate intervention of Madrid.

Kuchler quickly explained to his partner, who spoke no Spanish, the identity and social significance of Gil. Both then shook his hand with good German comradeship and emotion. The partner remained nameless and unreal as a figure in a nightmare. He had an obstinate, round, still face. Beer and money had both contributed to his shape. Nothing belonged to daily life at all except justifiable alarm at the probable future.

"I hope that you will not allow this to affect your plans," Gil said, more from a vague intention of covering himself than from cunning.

"A symbol!" Jaime broke in heartily. "The wall around the Villanueva estate is a symbol like the police. It is of no importance!"

The Press had rejoined the party, and was making up for the interruption in the flow of hospitality. It was very properly inquisitive.

The Mayor willingly developed his theory of the symbols which enraged the Left. He protested that the hotel could not be included among them.

"You do not believe me," he asked rhetorically. "Well then, enquire of our humble citizens! Constables Jimenez and

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Mejías, now guarding our door in peace and with devotion, are well known to Señor Kuchler as public servants of sturdy and independent opinion whose inside knowledge of our little town is unsurpassed. We will have them in and you shall talk to them freely!"

He flung open the solid door to the ante-room and called genially for the pair. The outer door to the passage was slightly open. There was no Jimenez, no Mejías, only a spattering of blood upon the wall and an ugly gobbet on the floor. At the Mayor's exclamation of horror, the four rushed into the ante-room.

"Quick! Quick!" Jaime shouted, locking the outer door. "Here in Lazalaya we allow no scandals. All is quiet. All must always be quiet."

He seized the tablecloth, napkins and soda syphon, and began feverishly to squirt and mop. Gil added a bottle of white wine to the pink pool. Whatever Jaime was up to, the risk was outrageous. It was urgent that the mess should vanish, whether it came from the constables or, as was more likely, the pork butcher.

And in any case, where were they and how could they vanish for good without enquiry?

Silent and furious, he worked with Jaime, hurling the soiled linen into a cupboard. Kuchler and his partner stood by, looking very pale. The newspaper correspondent added his sandwiches and free drinks to the mess. In three minutes from the Mayor's shout of alarm no sign of the tragedy remained and the doors were open. The ante-room gave the impression that someone carrying a tray had tripped, but of what he had spilt there was no evidence.

Gil tipped down his throat the contents of the last glass which remained in his scrubbing bottle. Kuchler's partner and the journalist, though still belonging to nightmare, came back into focus. Their faces were lard-white and expressionless. They asked if they might, immediately, go down to their car. Jaime, with polite protests, accompanied them as if nothing had happened, leaving Gil and Kuchler together in his office.

"Those two poor fellows!" Kuchler cried. "So harmless! So good-natured! Why should they be just a symbol? Revolution I can understand, but not this cold-blooded assassination. And in another month they would have retired on pension!"

"Perhaps the assailants were wounded," Gil babbled. "Perhaps Mejías and Jimenez have followed them..."

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He knew very well that it didn't matter what he said, or Jaime would never have left him alone with Kuchler.

"They told me in private that they were in fear of their lives," Kuchler said. "I even warned Don Jaime."

"Well, they have lasted a long time for Lazalaya," Gil replied with some obscure intent of comfort. "What did Jaime say?"

"He said they were devoted churchmen and always prepared to meet their end. You are—excuse me—so callous a people!"

"Sometimes we cannot find words for what we think," Gil said, wandering helplessly off towards the bottles on the floor.

"You can find plenty for what you don't think," Kuchler retorted, with the first flash of irony Gill had ever heard from him. "I cannot blame you or Don Jaime, but I have been grossly deceived by the Ministry of Tourism who must have known the conditions here."

"You are going to complain to them? Wouldn't it be unwise?"

"Naturally I shall have to be very careful. I do not want to spoil my chances of selling the land to some Englishman or Dutchman who does not know the country as I do."

It was now or never. Gil doubted the power of the Little Brothers to keep him out of gaol, but nobody else had any interest in trying.

"Shall we cancel the whole deal?" he asked.

"You mean you would buy the site back?"

"It is my duty as a Grandee of Spain. I feel my honour is affected," said Gil stiffly. "All I regret is that I cannot afford to compensate you for the work on the foundations."

"Let us leave that to our lawyers, my dear Count," Kuchler replied, leaping at his opportunity. "Cash or a mortgage?"

"Cash—I suppose."

"Then you will not find me unreasonable. And now, if you will pardon me, this room ... the memories of war ... a slight smell which reminds me ... I am unwell. I think I shall drive straight up to Madrid."

There was nothing to do but wait for Jaime in the safety of his office. Gil felt utterly unable to face the outside world where questions would be unanswerable and silence equally disconcerting. Meanwhile he restlessly tidied up bottles, plates and glasses so that the room looked as though some small entertainment had decorously ended.

The Civil Guard roared back into the courtyard. From the window he saw Jaime playing his part imperturbably and

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demanding news, like any other mayor, from an officer who was giving nothing away. Two civilian figures, formal and well-dressed, appeared from nowhere—they might have arrived in the assault car of the Civil Guard or merely been waiting behind the Town Hall—and addressed the Mayor with authority.

He turned into the building with one on each side.

It was too late to escape. Anyway there was no handy frontier, and nothing less would do. Jaime ushered the visitors into his office, pretending surprise and satisfaction at finding Gil there. He introduced the two civilians. A Captain Somebody. A Lieutenant Somebody. Their men in the cafés had been a joke, but these two, who had never yet been seen in the town, were disturbingly professional. They were not at all aggressive; they were smooth with the certainty that power gives.

It was a hundred to one that the political unrest in Lazalaya would come up before the Cabinet, but Jaime was magnificently unembarrassed. He seated himself at his desk, with the two opposite, and burst into speech. He welcomed, he said, investigation at last by two such talented and distinguished officers. Ever since some absurd prank at the old nunnery had alarmed the Civil Governor—but not, he might point out, the high ecclesiastical authorities—he had hoped that Madrid would make direct enquiries.

"And let us at once get rid of the irrelevant complication of my Vehicle," he said. "The Conde de Villanueva will tell you what happened."

"It wouldn't start," said Gil feebly.

"Did you retard the spark?"

"The spark? Jaime, in this day and age you have a lever to advance or retard the spark?"

"Of course I do! She won't climb the hills without a retarded spark. For starting one must also retard it or she will backfire. Friends, I think you will agree that I cannot be held responsible because the Civil Guard panicked at a sound which all my town is accustomed to? As our glorious *Generalisimo* has said, local affairs should be left to the local authorities with the least possible interference by the State."

"So this disturbance was not intended to cover up the attempt on the Villanueva property?" the captain asked with a slight smile which might have been relieved or ironical.

"What attempt?"

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"Ten metres of the boundary wall are blown down."

"I will have it built up again. An accident!"

"But who did it?"

"Well, you know we don't like sending humble, decent men to prison. It's national policy."

"Not so much of national policy if you please, Don Jaime! We are as aware of it as you are."

"Patience, Captain! I was on the point of explaining. The contractors who are building our hotel naturally have a store of explosives. Well, and we have a small community of fishermen. One should never be next to the other. To cut a long story short, they stole some explosives for use at sea. This was reported to me and I took the action which the father of a family should take. 'Friends,' I said, for I am accustomed to be obeyed, 'who did this I do not know and do not want to know. If the whole lot is destroyed at once, I will forget it.'

"Well, it appears that they let it off close to the Villanueva wall, which was upwind, so that the hillside should not catch fire. That was sensible. A morning's work will repair the damage. But they chose for their explosion a moment when I was entertaining distinguished foreigners. As a result, our hotel, the valued, indispensable project which will give life to our town is in danger."

"You accept this story?" the Captain asked Gil.

"Of course. I have no enemies."

"He has been congratulated by the Syndicate of Agricultural Workers," added the Mayor proudly.

"And you are prepared to swear that there is no political unrest in Lazalaya?"

"None. I am sure that all the reports of your agents will agree."

The Lieutenant, entering the conversation for the first time, remarked sourly that it was the only point on which they did agree.

The Captain, raising his eyebrows in astonishment that the reports of secret agents should be mentioned at all, gathered up his subordinate and left.

"Thank God it wasn't about Jimenez and Mejías!" Gil exclaimed.

"Don't worry! You see I have talent. Father Miguel will write to the Civil Governor about their pensions, and after him, to the Bishop."

"Damn their pensions! What's happened to them?"

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"Nothing! Nothing!" the Mayor answered soothingly. "But administratively speaking it presents a problem. Did you notice the slaughterman's van at the side door when you arrived?"

"I don't know. There was something."

"Well, that's how they left. He'll return their uniforms this evening. Lazalaya cannot afford new ones."

"Suppose he talks?"

"Then he won't get the contract for the hotel."

"There isn't going to be a hotel, Jaime."

"And how is he to know that? Sometimes I think you left your intelligence in America."

"But it must all come out! Tomorrow at the latest!"

"Then let it! Look! What has always been the defence of the humble? To make the authorities look fools, but in such a way that they cannot resent it. Gil, the town is proud of you."

"The police won't be."

"This is too serious for the police. The Civil Governor is bound to investigate the affair in person. Besides, he's in it up to the neck."

"I tell you, Jaime, he'll sit with his finger-tips together and sacrifice the pair of us."

"Not if he can score one up for himself. Let's go over to the Moderno! It is time to calm the spirits of our fellow citizens."

They certainly needed it. Lazalaya was buzzing with rumour, and the Mayor's café table was immediately surrounded, as if it had been a roulette table, by those who were privileged to sit there and others who had at least the right to lean over their shoulders.

When the crowd had thinned down to a dozen intimate friends, Jaime told his story of the damage to the Villanueva wall. The tale instantly became fact. No doubt, with a slight change of emphasis, it was.

Gil, listening with such admiration as he could manage and once again privileged to pay for drinks, considered that a few explosives had indeed been stolen and that Jaime, as his price for keeping quiet, blackmailed the culprit into setting them off against the wall.

At about eleven the disappearance of Jimenez and Mejías was reported to the newsroom. They had not returned to barracks and had apparently vanished into the air. Jaime,

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who had just received a gigantic omelette from the Moderno's kitchen, refused to be impressed. All he could say was that the missing constables had been on duty at the Town Hall when he went out to say goodbye to Kuchler's partner, and that they had not been there when he returned. He only hoped that no accident had happened, such as might be feared when an innocent town was under the threat of fire-arms in excitable hands.

Next morning, after one look at Lazalaya, Gil decided to remain at home. The women and the police had taken over. From every balcony and doorstep the high-pitched whispers criss-crossed the alleys with stories of confirmed murder and expected rape. The Civil Guard and mysterious strangers were sternly occupied and had at last a definite case for their note-books.

Jaime, in the intervals of replacing the old silencer on his Vehicle, was hounding on the search for Jiménez and Mejías and accompanying the police to improbable remotenesses where, alive or dead, they might be found. There was no fish, because the fishermen had decided to remain at sea indefinitely.

After three days it was at last with a feeling of relief that Gil received the writ of the Civil Governor. He packed a bag with such necessities as would, he thought, be permitted to a prisoner awaiting trial. Jaime, who was also in the police car and dressed in the black suit of thick cloth which he used for funerals and official visits, carried nothing but a packet of ham sandwiches presented, with a blessing, by Father Miguel.

They were escorted to the secretary's room, in which, sitting bolt upright against the wall, were two very obvious bodyguards. The personage closeted with Don Baltasar was plainly of cabinet rank. He had a powerful, military voice which rumbled through the double doors.

The high, legal tones of the Civil Governor sounded in contrast like the yapping of some small, but conscientious dog.

There was at last a moment of comparative silence. The telephone in the secretary's room demanded their immediate presence. As soon as they entered the great office, the row broke out again. Gil recognised the Cæsarean bald head and sturdy figure of the Director of Internal Security, responsible only to the Chief of State.

"... and the Press! For the sake of the Ministry of Tourism

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we have been compelled to censor the despatch of a respected German correspondent. And all this because of incapacity on the part of the Civil Governor who is utterly unable to explain the cause of the unrest!"

"I am bound to depend on my police and yours, General, for information," Don Baltasar retorted. "I have no more and no less than you. By the way, allow me to present the Conde de Villanueva and Don Jaime Caruncho, Mayor of Lazalaya."

"Delighted! ... It is an intolerable position. Where are we? With the Mafia in Sicily? Either no-one knows anything or everybody is afraid to talk. You there! You are the Mayor. These Germans tell us you badly wanted this hotel. Well, you aren't going to get it. And I am much inclined to send in a battalion of troops to assist you in your administration."

"We shall do our best to be hospitable, my General, though the resources of our town are small," replied Jaime with formal courtesy.

"And you, Villanueva! Are you going to maintain in front of me all these lies about your wall?"

Whether or not Gil had told any lies—he thought that on the whole he had not, though God alone knew how many he had condoned—this was deliberately impolite and not to be borne from any upstart of a government employee, however exalted.

He drew his steel at once.

"I had considered," he replied, "that it was only these absurd foreigners and the Civil Guard who made a habit of seeing revolutionaries under their beds. It is a shock to me that I must also include persons whom I, my fellow citizens and our beloved Leader are accustomed to trust in any circumstances."

"Your honour is as precious to me as my own," the General answered with ironical formality. "I shall therefore appeal to it. You were present on the occasion when, according to the Ministry of Tourism, these Germans saw the floor and walls of the Mayor's ante-room spattered with blood. Is it so or not?"

"On my honour I saw no human blood whatever. But perhaps—it is only my suggestion—red wine had flowed too freely."

"May I enquire what this new accusation is?" asked Don Baltasar.

"Two municipal police of Lazalaya have been murdered."

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"I regret that I know nothing."

"It seems one could murder half the province without Your Excellency's knowledge."

"That of course is so, if I am not given a copy of the report. The source of your information?"

"My sources are the German Embassy and the Ministry of Tourism . . .

"The Mayor of Lazalaya here will confirm that an investigation is proceeding."

"The mayors of small towns are not always in touch with the wider world, General. Can you give me the names of these two victims?"

"Alonso Mejías and Enrique Jimenez."

"Ah, indeed they are familiar," said the Civil Governor. "A question of pensions. It may be necessary, I fear, to appeal to the Cabinet. The unflagging interest of the Chief of State in the spiritual welfare of the people, which of course you and I fully share . . ."

Don Baltasar rang for his secretary.

"The Mejías-Jimenez file, please."

"Then you do know something?"

"I had no knowledge that they are dead, General. Now, let me see! Ah, yes," he went on, leafing through a file which seemed to Gil to have acquired a surprising number of documents in a short time. "These two policemen heard the irresistible call of religion a month before they were due to retire.

"It is regrettable that they should have deserted their post without orders. It complicates so abominably their pension rights."

"They aren't murdered?"

"There is no mention of it in the file. It's the pension which has been referred . . ."

"Then where the devil are they?"

The Civil Governor lowered his eyes in mild disapproval of this military and overbearing language.

"My dear General, upon a sudden impulse—and who are we to question it?—these two simple devotees, perhaps encouraged by their parish priest, perhaps alarmed by the recent disturbance of their long and meditative peace in municipal service, have taken their provisional vows and entered the Convent of the Little Brothers of St. Macario."

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BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS REVIEWED

by Arthur Pottersman

NOVELS

IN *The Anti-Death League*, by Kingsley Amis, Lucky Jim has gone serious. In fact, this is the most deeply thought-out novel yet from Amis, who shows evidence of strong feelings about God, death and *la condition humaine*.

The scene is principally an army camp, where, in comically fussy and inefficient secrecy, manœuvres with tactical atomic weapons are carried out, and a particularly vicious piece of skulduggery, "Operation Apollo," is prepared for.

The second scene is a psychiatric nursing-home near the camp, run by the sinister Dr. Best—and Amis takes great delight in eventually exploding his pseudo-scientific mumbo-jumbo.

The plot rambles a bit, but soon settles down with a solid series of relationships: these centre around a wealthy nymphomaniac who holds men-only parties in her mansion near the camp. Into her *milieu* come Catharine—recently out of a nursing-home where she has been recovering from a nervous breakdown—and Lieutenant James Churchill, who falls in love with her, and makes it possible for her to accept living happily ever after.

Hacking our way through a number of typically

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Amisian irrelevances, we reach the point of the novel; a heart-felt protest against undeserved suffering.

An Anti-Death League is formed within the camp, to campaign against the Christian God. Is it subversive? Is espionage involved? Here Amis saws away madly with some well-handled red-herrings, which lead to the downfall of Dr. Best, the psycho boy.

Catharine goes into hospital for a cancer operation. James, now her lover, takes the blame for it all upon himself for having got into Operation Apollo, and falls into a cataleptic state. Since this is fiction, and Amis is superstitious about a happy ending, Catharine comes out of hospital and kisses James back to consciousness.

Though in some ways a muddled novel, with too many sub-plots for maximum clarity, Amis drives his philosophical points home with strength and feeling. *And* there's a hang-over from "Lucky Jim," too; Dr. L. S. Caton, the academic baddie who pinched Jim's original research and went off to lecture in South America, returns to give a talk at the army camp—and is accidentally shot dead! (Gollancz, 30s.)

Watchers on the Shore, by Stan Barstow, takes us back into "A Kind of Loving" land—with Vic and Ingrid after three years of married life. It's neither as deep nor, he discovers, as broad as a man might wish. "Do you love me?" asks his wife as they lie in bed together, and Vic thinks: Ah, dear God, words, words, words. I'm here, aren't I, married to her, living with her?

Vic goes to live in another part of England, meaning all the while to bring Ingrid over from Yorkshire; but she can't leave home with a sick mum to look after. A combination of loneliness, curiosity and physical desire attracts him to an actress in the local rep. The affair is inconclusive, but leads to the break-up of his marriage.

A weakness of Barstow's writing is that he concentrates on the man's feelings and experiences; the novel is, therefore, two-dimensional. But he captures the flat day-to-dayness of English life; working, drinking, at times even loving. And the mood of a young man who, when his mistress sends him a loving letter thinks: Words, words, words. And all I know is feeling... (Michael Joseph, 25s.)

John Rowan Wilson's *Hall of Mirrors* is a mighty (384 pages) medical yarn. Every ingredient known to best-sellers

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is here; medicine, courtroom drama in a libel trial, wartime flashbacks. Written with all the expertise you would expect from the Assistant Editor of the British Medical Journal. (Collins, 21s.)

The Russian Interpreter, by Michael Frayn, is set in Moscow amid the English colony and some curious Soviet academics, and has therefore a curious out-of-this-world air about it. Perhaps that is what life in Moscow is like!

Paul Manning, an English sociologist with a tendency towards falling in love, gets mixed up with Proctor-Gould, an old college mate who now operates a nice business in cultural exchange. Suspicions of espionage creep in (I won't reveal whether they are justified), and a pair of tough young Soviet types take the Englishman for a rather nasty ride.

Frayn's moral goes something like this; whatever you are, there are strong men and women who like using weak men and women who like being used. (Collins, 21s.)

Penelope At War, by Oriana Fallaci, deals with a woman who thinks she is free and equal. And what does she do when an irresistible man keeps stumbling through her life? Señorita Fallaci's heroine careers blindly round New York to find the answer. And what does she do? In the end, she cries. (Michael Joseph, 25s.)

Geoffrey Household's new book, *Sabres On the Sand*, is an intelligent collection of short stories by the master craftsman of the adventure yarn. Written with quiet ironic humour, the stories range from the impossibility of escaping from Italian prisoner-of-war camps (their guards were too inefficient) to the difficult position of a man quite innocently lost in a wine cellar with a very attractive, sleepy woman. (Michael Joseph, 25s.)

A Story For Teddy, by Harvey Swados, is about a young selfish American boy who is suddenly stunned into actual pain when he is confronted by searing poverty in Mexico; a bullying white man who learns it's not human to frighten a native tart; young lovers blindly failing to communicate with each other. (Hart-Davis, 25s.)

It's the most difficult thing in anthologising to introduce non-addicted readers to science fiction; so many stories are

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too simple, or too technical. *Science Fiction Showcase*, edited by Mary Kornbluth, widow of the late C. M. Kornbluth, treads the edge with yarns that have genuine literary objectivity. (Whiting, 21s.)

The Absorbing Fire, by F. W. Kenyon, is inevitably a most successful historical novel formula, based on the life and legend of Lord Byron. Emphasis is on tempestuousness in his personal relations (not to my liking, I admit) rather than poetical development. (Hutchinson, 30s.)

Nine Before Fotheringay, by Julian Forrest, is a very serious historical novel about Mary, Queen of Scots. Highly unusual, dealing with her friends and enemies—from John Knox and Elizabeth I to the Earl of Bothwell, her third husband—who speak in turn on the history, politics and scandal of her life and times. It's all very serious but not, blessedly, deadly serious. (Bles, 25s.)

In *Constantine*, by Frank G. Slaughter, there's purple, rather than fine writing. How the mighty pagan Roman Empire turned to Christianity is, naturally, not everybody's theme. Slaughter, though a tendentious writer at times, has the knack of yarning with drama. (Hutchinson, 30s.)

THRILLERS

THE trouble with contemporary thrillers is, too many of them ignore the basic facts of cops', private eyes', and robbers' lives: the thriller, ideally, is the story of a man without a gun pursuing a man with a gun. Under those circumstances, neither running man has the time to bed down with any convenient dame.

From this premise, I rate the current batch of sleuths, spies and assorted hard cases as follows:

Billion Dollar Brain, by Len Deighton, is tops for sophisticated gadgetry, snappy dialogue, complicated plottery (isn't life like that?). It's low on *convincing fiction*—that most profitable novelist's blend of facts and fiction.

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Our ingenious, bloody-minded lad from Burnley finds himself (doesn't British Intelligence *ever* know what it's sending him on?) up against a privately-owned, computer-directed, horrible anti-Communist espionage network. Texan multi-millionaire leads the crusade, natch. (Jonathan Cape, 21s.)

A great favourite with Argosy readers, Michael Gilbert now returns to the legal profession for his new thriller, *The Crack in the Teacup.* The hero, a young solicitor, finds himself with a major campaign against racketeering on his hands. Local council, the Press and the police become involved and the whole story moves along with tremendous zest. (Hodder and Stoughton, 18s.)

Desmond Bagley's *Wyatt's Hurricane* is a good political adventure down in the Caribbean. Should the revolutionary goodies warn the tyrannical baddies that a mighty hurricane is about to make the political argument irrelevant—or should they let nature do the work for them? (Collins, 21s.)

More thrilling Caribbean politics in *Shooting Script*, by Gavin Lyall. This is a tough morality drama played out between two ex-fighter-pilot buddies on opposite sides of the revolution. (Hodder and Stoughton, 18s.)

There's some slickery-pokery in New York banking circles with one nice gambit—a henpecked gangster. This is the theme of Robert L. Fish's *Brazilian Sleigh Ride*, but it was not quite reliable enough to keep the mystery from me after page 66. (Broadman, 13s. 6d.)

Despite the naked-breasted dust-jacket, *It Won't Get You Anywhere*, by Desmond Skirrow, is as exciting as Monday night in Barnstaple. Mad Welsh tycoon plans to take over Britain. There's no mystery—just a question of how long till our hero beds down for the last time on page 251. (Bodley Head, 18s.)

In *Passport to Peril*, by James Leasor, a country doctor skis, shoots, runs and makes love brilliantly. No wonder the Chinese didn't stand a chance with their fiendish plot to blackmail the world's richest men to raise money to start an independent spy network.

CIA protect us! (Heinemann, 18s.)

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IN *How 007 Got His Name*, Mary Wickham Bond tells how she first thought her husband, James, was being shadowed by some fantastic espionage outfit when she found in "Dr. No," many personalities and actual experiences from her husband's life.

So, on February 1, 1961, she wrote to Mr. Ian Fleming, holding him responsible for the murky business: "You must have been following JB around the West Indies, and picking up some of his adventures. It came to him as a surprise when he discovered that you had brazenly taken the name of a real human being for your rascal!

"And after reading 'Dr. No,' my JB thought you'd been to Dirty Dick's in Nassau and talked with old Farrington and got from him the story about the *Pricilla* and a wild tale about Jim's collecting parrots on Abaco. That was the time he spent several nights in a cave full of bats to get away from the mosquitoes.

"I tell my JB he could sue you for defamation of character, but he regards the whole thing as a joke."

Ian Fleming replied to Mary Bond four months later: "I will confess at once that your husband has every reason to sue me in every possible position and for every kind of libel in the book, for I will now confess the damnable truth."

This was that Fleming knew all about James Bond—the real JB, a top banana in ornithology, and chose his brief, unromantic but very masculine name for his secret agent—James Bond II.

Fleming apologised, in a laughing sort of way, and in return, offered to let James Bond the birdman use his name to Christen any particularly horrible species of bird in an insulting fashion to get his own back.

In the fullness of time, the two men met—happily on both sides. "I'm sorry about all this bother," said Fleming.

Replied James Bond: "It's not always too bad. Sometimes it's rather fun."

There were, as Mary Bond recalls, the looks and hints from pretty girls—a Customs officer

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who asked if Bond was carrying firearms. "No," said JB patting himself under his left armpit, "and if I had, it wouldn't be in my suitcase, would it?"

At one literary party a lady rushed up to the birdman and cried: "Oh Mr. Bond! I did so much enjoy your 'Dr. No!'"

Newspapers still dream up headlines about him: JAMES BOND HOT ON TRAIL OF A BIRD OF A CASE, for example. But the heat is off now, says Mrs. Bond, as she dedicated her book: *To the real James Bond—a quiet man with a quiet name.* (Collins, 10s. 6d.)

In Colin Rickards' *Bowler Hats and Stetsons* it was Christmas Eve in the old Senate Saloon at Austin, Texas. Ben Thompson, gambler and gunfighter, stood drinking at the bar. Suddenly the saloon owner and Thompson's old foe, a hot-tempered Irishman named Mark Wilson, appeared in the gallery, armed with a shotgun.

He blasted at Thompson with both barrels. They missed, and Thompson's gun was out and shooting. His first bullet caught Wilson in the chest and toppled him from the gallery. Three more bullets slammed into his falling body. Another shot rang out behind Ben Thompson. He spun around, alarmed by a bullet plucking at his coat, and saw the barman, Mathews, holding a Winchester rifle.

Mathews ducked, but the gunfighter, guessing his enemy's position behind the polished mahogany bar, fired through the woodwork. The bullet caught Mathews in the mouth.

Thompson was tried—and acquitted. Soon afterwards he became Chief of Police in Austin.

Well, I didn't make it up. Neither did Colin Rickards. And neither did many a Western film writer—though all of them would be proud to have authored such a scene. This is a history of the real Wild West in the last forty years of the nineteenth century, and the parts played by Englishmen and their women along that rough frontier.

Ben Thompson the gunfighter, for example, was a Yorkshireman—from Knottingley in the West Riding. His printer-father took the whole family to Texas in 1851. Other characters for whom we may or may not feel national pride include Bob Carr, a member of the first gang of bandits to attack a stagecoach. Dick Hargrove, a London boy, a great gambler and lady-lover who once killed an angry husband in a Bowie-knife duel and beat another man to death with his bare hands.

William Smith, from Leicester, gained fame when he gave

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the famous Wyatt Earp a beating. Thomas James Dimsdale, a don from Oxford, formed a tough band of vigilantes who drove the gangsters off the gold fields of Montana.

This is an invigorating and unusual account of the old West, though much of the writing is scrappy. (Whiting, 30s.)

A story about a *lady* spy—*Cynthia*, by H. Montgomery Hyde. According to Sir William Stephenson, Chief of British wartime Intelligence in the Western hemisphere, she was "the war's greatest unsung heroine." Some say that her most successful *coup* changed the course of the war.

She was brought up and educated in the most conventional upper-middle-class way, by late Edwardian standards. She was a deb at Buckingham Palace. She went on to be a leading lady in British embassies when she married her first husband, a professional diplomat.

She also had, says Hyde—in this first-ever account of her life—a tiger lurking in her blood.

Cynthia's first work took her to Warsaw. Her Polish lover, a high-up in the Foreign Office, let slip that Germany and Poland shared plans for dismembering Czechoslovakia. Cynthia mentioned this to the Warsaw embassy's Secret Service man. "Go right back and get any more stuff that you can," he told her. Surprised, but far from unwilling, Cynthia persuaded her Polish friend, under the warmest possible circumstances, to give her more information about the projected carve-up.

Later she received a twenty-pound-a-month allowance from Secret Service funds, with strict orders not to let her husband know what she was doing, and she was told to cultivate all the Polish contacts she could. A new romance started after this—with Jan, a member of the Polish Foreign Minister's staff.

Bunches of pink roses and highly emotional conversations began to alternate with secret information. Jan was deeply in love with her. Scandal was bound to follow, and in the end the British Ambassador ordered her to leave Poland—despite the horrified protests of her spy-master.

Cynthia's biggest *coup* came, however, in the war. She had moved by then to Washington, and with the help of a small allowance from Secret Service funds, set about serving Britain the only way she knew—for deeply patriotic reasons, says Hyde.

She started up again an old liaison with the Italian naval attaché, Admiral Alberto Lais. She gave him love—though

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not physical affection, it seems—and he arranged for her to receive the secret ciphers she needed: the result was that British Intelligence forestalled Italian Fleet movements, and the Royal Navy crippled the larger Italian Fleet in a battle off Greece in 1941.

A few months later, Cynthia was asked to obtain the secrets of the Vichy French Embassy in Washington—essential knowledge for the British War Cabinet, for whom the disposition of the French Fleet and the French gold reserves could be matters of life and death.

Cynthia became the mistress of the French Press Attaché, a Captain Charles Brousse. He, the gallant Frenchman, may have thought he was the pursuing Casanova. In fact, he was Cynthia's quarry. She entrapped him with all her wiles.

Brousse became infatuated with her, and supplied her with plenty of information. Eventually she brought him to the point where he accompanied her to the Embassy strong-room.

Cynthia, already well briefed by an American safe-breaker, stripped for action—literally. She made her lover undress, too. Then the night-watchman came in. He saw the naked couple and retreated in totally unsuspecting confusion.

"You see," said Cynthia, later, "there was method in my madness!" (Hamish Hamilton, 25s.)

The Mountbattens—biography of a dynasty by Alden Hatch describes how: "That night, while Philip had his bachelor dinner, Elizabeth dined alone with her parents and sister, a solemn nostalgic meal. Afterwards, the choirmaster of the Abbey arrived to go over the wedding music...

"Commander Norfolk gave Philip his bachelor dinner at the Dorchester Hotel. All his closest pals were there—David Milford Haven, his best man; Lieutenant Michael Parker; Baron, the Court photographer who had introduced him to the Thursday Club; many other naval officers and of course, Uncle Dickie in tearing high spirits.

"The party started decorously with sherry followed by champagne at dinner, with lots of toasts. Around midnight some of the guests unfortunately switched to beer. However, it was still orderly enough so the Press and photographers were let in and broke the thing up, leaping on chairs, trying odd angles —while the guests grabbed their cameras and took pictures of them. As one photographer raced around the table for a side shot, Mountbatten yelled, "I'm being outflanked!" (W. H. Allen, 50s.)

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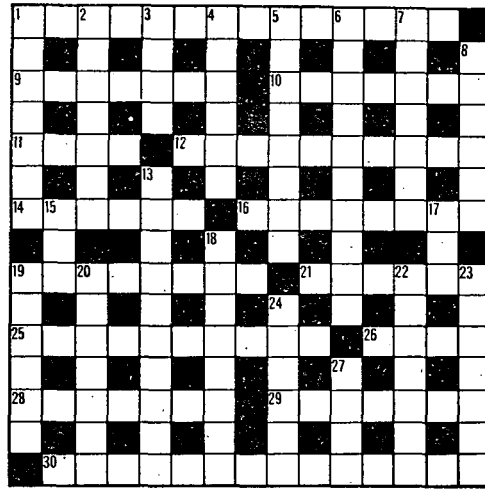
ARGOSY CROSSWORD

Solution next month



ACROSS

1 Boss of the barbecue? (6, 3, 5).

9 Soft and balmy! (7).

10 Could have been nastier, but still upset (2, 5).

11 A strange-looking plant (4).

12 Abstaining group not disheartened (4, 2, 4).

14 The majority party is rebellious! (6).

16 Carrier made redundant by 29 (8).

19 Soccer babe? (8).

21 Sportsman putting up the stakes! (6).

25 He's convinced stars make a fortune (10).

26 Dust around, finding button (4).

28 Right material for Ann who's 20 (7).

29 Cut short a card-game (7).

30 Faust's friend—or fiend (14).

DOWN

1 Fruity background conversation (7).

2 Joke that went trippingly? (3-4).

3 Disturbing ones who oppose (4).

4 Colour of hair gives artist away (6).

5 Bad men always around fallen idol (4-4).

6 In disarray because not working (3, 2, 5).

7 Clear space — a cabin? (3-4).

8 A tern shows us where (6).

13 Discredited doctrine (10).

15 Beheaded pig—the blade may be dripping! (3).

17 Drink and be soundly sick! (3).

18 One shire produces leading ladies (8).

19 " While he —— his at one gulp " (Browning) (6).

20 In time for grammar—so eager! (7).

22 El Cid at this fortress (7).

23 Remedy is to change habit! (7).

24 Smoothly added to the score (6).

27 " Yet all experience is an —— " (Tennyson) (4).

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